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[“THIS IS SO VERY UNEXPECTED—SO VERY DREADFUL.”]

## THE HEARTS OF THREE GOOD WOMEN. BY PIERRE LECLERCQ.

### CHAPTER XVII.

“FOR THAT REASON, I SHOULD BE GLAD.”

It is very pleasant to be beloved.

Godfrey was not coxcomical, however, and he was more grieved than pleased at Miss Elworth's confession. Had she been anyone but Miss Elworth, he would most probably have been more pleased than grieved at finding himself so unexpectedly the object of her love.

When Miss Witchwood said to Eve “I forgive you,” without having the faintest idea what Eve's offence was, and regarding it as a purely imaginary one, Godfrey left the library door and retired to his own room.

Her confession—and indeed the entire strange interview—had considerably distressed and startled him, and it was only after pacing his

room numerous times that he was enabled to think upon the matter with anything like calmness.

He knew that the love of such a girl as Eve (child though she was in years) was an extremely serious affair—that it might very easily result in her being mad, not occasionally, but always. Her love was not one of her delusions. He wished it were. Her love was clearly (according to her own confession) in keeping with her strange character—dreadfully intense. Its alarming intensity was proved by the fact that his influence over her mind (when she was mad) was considerably greater than Miss Witchwood's influence.

“Why should she love me?” he said to himself, bitterly, as though her love were a great insult to him. “Because, poor dear, she is mad, I suppose,” he answered, also bitterly.

And then, without knowing why he did it, Godfrey mildly cursed himself.

“The hearts of two good women!” he said to himself again, “and, properly, I don't deserve one, or half of one. I'm afraid that I am one of those worthless chaps who get the love of women without trying for it. It all goes to the worthless, witless scamps—it all goes to the worthless, witless scamps!”

This tone of Godfrey's was very extraordinary, but he was really annoyed on his own

account that Miss Elworth should love him, and for this reason:

Looking at the position of affairs as clearly as he could, there seemed to be only one thing to do—one action about the advisability of performing which there seemed to be no doubt. His duty was evident. His duty, he found, was a very inconvenient one.

There was only one course for him to follow, as he saw it then. He resolved, however, to think the matter over very seriously, to the end of finding another and less unpleasant course if possible.

He did not feel at all anxious, either to again encounter Miss Elworth that evening at dinner, or to explain matters to her aunt; indeed he did not think he could do either then, had he wished to.

“I must make up my mind to-night!” he said, and then he wrote a few pencilled words to Miss Witchwood, hurriedly.

“FORGIVE my absence this evening,” he wrote, “and pray make some plausible excuse for it to your niece. I am much troubled. When I can see my way to telling you what passed in the library this afternoon you shall know all. Miss Elworth must not know that I was with her. If my temporary disappearance mystifies you—

forgive me—I am acting for Miss Elworth's good."

Godrey rang his bell, but before it could be answered he put his note to Miss Witchwood in an envelope and left the room. He met a servant as he was descending the stairs.

"Are the ladies dressing for dinner?"

"Yes, sir."

"Miss Elworth has been ill. Do you know if she is any better?"

"I believe so, sir. My mistress and she went to their rooms from the library together. Miss Elworth was very pale, but quite calm, sir, I think."

"Thank you. That note is for Miss Witchwood. Give it to her, if you please, directly."

The servant took the note and carried it to her mistress. Godrey put on his hat and left the house.

It may appear that Godrey was cowardly, shirking the performance of an unpleasant but absolutely necessary task—the enlightenment of Miss Witchwood on her niece's secret. It was not quite so. There were two things to justify that conduct.

Firstly—Miss Elworth would not be distressed by his presence (which she would have been after that so recent confession to her aunt as she supposed), and, secondly—there was a likelihood that during his absence Miss Witchwood might learn her niece's secret from her niece's lips, which would be infinitely more pleasant than hearing Godrey say "The niece you so dearly love has fallen in love with me."

Apart from this, Godrey knew that directly he showed himself to Miss Witchwood she would insist upon his telling her everything concerning the scene in the library.

He would be bound to tell her, and after telling her he would be bound to perform his inconvenient duty. He wanted to delay the performance of that duty. He wanted to be sure that it was his duty. He wanted, in short, to find some other less unpleasant way of producing the required result.

Godrey had not quite recovered from his recent stupefaction when he left Pondcourt House. He was trembling on the brink of the second grand discovery.

He walked quickly and moodily to Pondcourt and dined at an hotel there. He tried and tried over and over again, during the walk, the dinner, and the cigar to find some other means of doing his duty, but he failed to find them.

"It must be done!" he said—and when he felt the pain that those words gave him he (so strange was Godrey) felt also that he was a villain.

At Pondcourt House a very dull evening was passed. Miss Witchwood was mystified by Godrey's note and absence, and Miss Witchwood detected mystery.

She was very anxious to know what had passed between Mr. Overside and her niece that afternoon, but she could not question her niece thereupon, forasmuch as she was supposed by her niece to know all about it already. Miss Witchwood was somewhat angry at Godrey's absence too—she could not understand why he should cause a delay in telling her—nor why, indeed, he had absented himself at all.

There was much about her niece's behaviour at and after dinner which also disturbed Miss Witchwood. When Miss Witchwood, feeling bound to obey Godrey's injunction, since she was totally ignorant of the matter herself, made a plausible excuse to her niece for Godrey's absence, Miss Elworth clasped her hands gratefully, and kissing her aunt whispered "How fortunate! I could not meet his eyes, aunt, so soon after sharing my secret with you."

Again, every time Miss Witchwood addressed her niece her niece blushed. During dinner she scarcely raised her eyes from her plate, and when she spoke to her aunt it was in a low, trembling, and timid voice.

More than once she whispered to her aunt to beg her to repeat to her that she was forgiven, and more than once she dropped words which more than ever mystified Miss Witchwood, and made her long for Godrey's return and an explanation.

Eve retired to bed early, and kissed her aunt repeatedly and passionately on bidding her "good night." Mrs. Barrycourt retired shortly after Eve. Miss Witchwood took a book, which she did not read, and waited in the drawing-room with marvellous patience for the return of Mr. Overside.

Before eleven o'clock that night he reached Pondcourt House. The servant who admitted him told him that Miss Witchwood was waiting for him in the drawing-room.

"I will go to her at once," he said, and the servant left him.

Alone for a moment, Godrey looked round the hall as if he were about to bid farewell to it. He had made up his mind. There was only one thing to be done, now that Miss Elworth had confessed her love for him, and he had come to do it. His face was very pale, his expression very sad. He put his hand softly on the handle of the drawing-room door, and then for a moment withdrew it.

It was an unpleasant task, for several reasons. For a moment he regarded it selfishly, so as to derive some consolation from it.

"It will hasten my marriage with Annie," he thought; "for that reason I should be glad."

He knocked at the door. Miss Witchwood answered from the drawing-room, "Come in!" and he obeyed her.

It will be remembered, perhaps, that Miss Witchwood once said to Mr. Farrands:

"Mr. Overside will only leave Pondcourt House by discharging himself."

Godrey was about to do it now.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"IF SHE WERE NOT EVE I SHOULD HATE HER."

GODREY'S interview in the drawing-room with Miss Witchwood lasted an hour. It was a highly unpleasant hour to both of them, though Godrey, difficult as was his task, acquitted himself most creditably, and Miss Witchwood observed and appreciated the refined manner in which he made known to her the awkward fact that her niece had fallen in love with him.

He represented that love as being simply one of Miss Elworth's inexplicable delusions; but he did not underrate its gravity, nor deny the necessity of efforts being made to eradicate it, and he delicately suggested (for it seemed to him that the idea of anyone falling in love with him must be an intensely incredible and ridiculous idea to Miss Witchwood) that Miss Elworth's delusion might as probably have been a love for a tree, or a house, or any other lifeless object.

Miss Witchwood was considerably shocked and surprised. Now and again, when Godrey stopped for a moment in his narration of what had passed that afternoon in the library, expecting her to say something, she simply motioned him to proceed.

Her lovely face wore an expression of extreme pain while she listened to him, and more than once he fancied she was about to burst into tears, but she did not. He would not have liked to see Miss Witchwood cry—nay, more, he could not imagine Miss Witchwood crying.

"This is so very unexpected! so very dreadful!"

"Not dreadful, Miss Witchwood," he said. "I do not think the results will be very serious. Miss Elworth will forget it, as she has forgotten other delusions."

"What must you think of her?" she said, rising from her chair and pacing the room a little angrily. "A child who has only known you two weeks. If she were not mad—if she were not Eve I should hate her."

"Miss Witchwood," said Godrey, "you are mistaken in the view you take of this unfortunate affair. Observe this distinction: Miss Elworth does not—does not love me; Miss Elworth thinks she loves me."

She stopped and grasped his hands warmly, giving them one hearty, wanly shake, and then releasing them.

"It's like you to say that," she said; "it's like you to try and make this blow—and it is a very heavy blow, mind you—fall lightly on me. I recognise your distinction, but it is you who are mistaken—or, rather, it is you who are kindly attempting to deceive me. Miss Elworth loves you as any sane but passionate woman might love you. I believe it to have nothing to do with her madness—her original madness. I should say, Let me tell you my view of the matter. If you were not engaged to be married, Mr. Overside, I should say to you, 'Try and love my niece.'"

"And marry her?"

"And marry her, Mr. Overside," returned Miss Witchwood. "Your influence over her mind is great. The doctors declare her madness to be incurable. I do not believe the doctors. I believe that your society could cure it—gradually, of course. I believe that the effect of this love for you on my poor, foolish child, when she learns from me that you are engaged and so on, will be two-fold—an evil effect and a good effect."

"What is the evil effect that you anticipate?"

"The breaking of her heart, Mr. Overside."

"Miss Witchwood, you regard the matter too seriously."

"I beg your pardon," answered Miss Witchwood. "I take upon myself to say that I am regarding the matter rightly. I studied Eve's mother. I have studied Eve. I have studied Eve's madness. It will break her heart. That is perhaps a senseless, conventional expression. I amend it. It will destroy her happiness."

"And the good effect?"

"It will restore her mind," replied Miss Witchwood. "Her madness will henceforth be, to use the words of hers which you have just quoted, the madness of the sane."

Miss Witchwood resealed herself and assumed a favourite position of hers when she was in deep thought. The elbow of her right arm rested on her left hand—her eyes were almost hidden from Godrey by her right hand. Sitting so, she said, after some moments' silence:

"To-morrow I will examine Eve's mind and heart on this unlucky affair, and break to her that you are engaged to be married. To-night we can only do one thing towards stifling this unfortunate passion of hers. There are certain unpleasant words which must pass between us before we leave this room. I am sure that you feel that—that you know the words I allude to."

Godrey bowed. Miss Witchwood still held her hand before her eyes. Godrey took advantage of that position and her defective sight. Godrey put his handkerchief to his eyes for a moment and then answered her.

"I know the words, Miss Witchwood. They were on my lips when I entered this room this night," he said. "Whatever Miss Elworth's foolish passion prove to be—whatever its results—beneficial or disastrous—there can be no doubt about the necessity of our taking this step. It is your place to tell me that I must leave Pondcourt House."

Miss Witchwood took her hand from her eyes and looked at it. Godrey looked at it too, and thought that he would be very sorry when he came to take it for the last time.

"We shall miss you very much," she said, still looking at her hand. "It displeases me that you should be inconvenienced through no fault of your own. It seems unjust; but, as you say, it is necessary. In a very short time you have made yourself a part of the idea which is conveyed by the words 'Pondcourt House.' We shall be very sorry at saying 'Farewell' to you."

"There are thousands of drawing-masters more competent than I," he said.

"Possibly," she answered, raising her eyes from her hand and herself from the chair and speaking more in her usual way, that is to say, less vacantly, and more briskly and cheerily.

"Possibly," she said; "but I took the liberty just then of thinking of you as a friend and not as a drawing-master. There are thousands of



drawing-masters, I know; but, as you told me on the first day I saw you, there is only one Mr. Overside. I am afraid I shall make you vain," she added, with a laugh, "so let us say no more about regrets at parting. One word before we end this unpleasant interview. I want you to indulge a whim—a very foolish whim of mine. Will you?"

Miss Witchwood asked the question with a smile, so Godfrey smiled in return, though very faintly. It was, of course, a very serious affair to him—this loss of one hundred and fifty pounds a year.

"You know," she said, still smiling, "that the Witchwood Jaidit is very strongly developed in me. I said to Mr. Farrands the other day these words, 'Mr. Overside will only leave Pondcourt House by discharging himself.' It pains me to have to break this promise that I made to myself; it pains me to have to treat you like a servant. There seems to be so much selfishness in saying 'You have behaved perfectly, but you must go. Your presence here is an inconvenience to me, and therefore you must go.'"

"I am anxious," she went on, still smiling—so sweetly, although so sadly, that Godfrey, with his eyes fixed earnestly upon hers, involuntarily reflected her smile on his own face—"to show you my esteem—to prove the trust I have in you—to make our parting less unpleasant—to show that I hold you blameless in this matter—to show that you have given me every satisfaction, from first to last. Mr. Overside, I want you to go, but I will not bring that about by the influence of the mistress; I prefer to employ the influence of friendship. I dare say you consider me a very odd creature. I think I am. No matter. I have my whims occasionally, as all persons have. This is my foolish whim—I positively refuse to discharge you?"

"Miss Witchwood! you are not serious?" "I am perfectly serious," she answered. "I positively refuse to discharge you, but I say to you, Mr. Overside, the happiness of my niece depends on your leaving Pondcourt House at the end of this week."

He understood her. There seemed to be a lump in his throat, which would not let him speak quite plainly. He answered her.

"Miss Witchwood," he said, "I beg to discharge myself."

She spontaneously seized his hand and gave it that one hearty, manly shake again, and then the interview was at an end, and they parted for the night.

## CHAPTER XIX.

"THERE IS A TRAIN THAT LEAVES PADDINGTON AT 11:55 A.M."

On the following day Mrs. Barrycourt and Godfrey breakfasted and lunched alone. From the morning to a few minutes before the dinner hour Miss Witchwood and her niece were closeted together in the latter's bedroom.

Miss Witchwood found her niece in the morning in unusually gay spirits. Miss Witchwood kissed her affectionately, and then proposed that they should spend the morning and afternoon in that room together, unseen and undisturbed. Miss Elworth instantly asked the reason which led her aunt to propose that arrangement. Her aunt replied that she desired to have a very long and serious conversation with her niece. Miss Elworth blushed and inquired the subject. Miss Witchwood answered:

"Mr. Overside."

Miss Elworth blushed again, smiled, patted her aunt's cheeks and said:

"Say his Christian name. Let me see if your dear lips look like mine when they pronounce 'Godfrey.'"

Miss Witchwood positively refused, despite of much coaxing, to humour her in that particular.

Elve's anxiety lest Godfrey should suspect that she loved him was very great. Miss Witchwood assured her that such a thing was in the last degree improbable, and upon that appealed to Eve's pride.

Did not Eve think that it was shockingly un-Witchwood-like to have to desire concealment and fear suspicion? Yes, but she could not resist loving him. Did she think it at all likely that Mr. Overside would return her excessively foolish passion?

No! Did that thought distress her very sorely? No, not exactly—there was an ecstatic joy in the deep mournfulness of the thought. Could she bear to think of Mr. Overside as married to another? Yes, if he were happy in that marriage. Could she bear parting with Mr. Overside with the knowledge that she would never see him again? Yes, if separation from her brought happiness to him.

And so gently, gradually, and tenderly—with her arms around her, tightening their hold slightly at every word that might strike harshly—employing all the forces of her strong mind, her knowledge of her niece, her affection for her niece, and her clever woman's tact—studying each word and its probable effect before she made it beautiful by giving it soft utterance—the perfect woman prepared, by religion and pure love mingled, the poor, imperfect child to bear the bitter news.

Mr. Overside had discharged himself from her service. Mr. Overside would leave Pondcourt House at the end of the week. Mr. Overside was going to leave them and be married. Neither she nor he would see him more.

Eve received the intelligence with astounding calmness. Her cheeks blanched, her sighs became frequent, quivering, deep, and the gay spirits of the morning left her, but there was no excitement nor loud wailing attending her grief—yet her love for Godfrey was no delusion.

It was a very strange love that she bore him—a love which would have been a mournful love even had it been returned—a love which did not regard marriage as its fitting end—a pure, holy, and yet wild love, that did not know jealousy, that would have allowed her to love as well his wife or the woman that he chanced to love.

She asked, with a deep interest evident both in her voice and face, a hundred questions about Godfrey's future wife, which Miss Witchwood could not answer.

Miss Witchwood only knew that Godfrey was going to marry the sister of Mr. Sheene, but on that slender knowledge poor Eve built an Annie that would have allowed her to love as well his wife or the woman that he chanced to love.

"I should like to see him once again, aunty," she said, so quietly and resignedly that Miss Witchwood felt fearful lest the calmness should prove to be the prologue to a storm.

"I should like to see him once again, aunty," she said, "to-night at dinner, I think; and after that perhaps it will be best to do as you propose—to keep in my own room till he has gone; you can say that I am ill, though I do not care what you say so long as you hide the truth from him, dearest. I may pray for him and his wife, may I not, aunty? Don't—please don't look so sad. I am quite quiet and contented, dear, indeed I am, and I will do whatever you think best, because that is best. I will put myself and my love, as I have always done till having a secret separated us for a little time, in your pretty hands, dearest, and as they are so soft and good and kind I will go to sleep upon them and try in my dreams there to think that we are living the old days over again before he came—that all my love belongs, as it should belong, to you."

So, still with the astounding calmness upon her, she appeared at dinner that evening. She scarcely uttered a dozen words, though when they were in the drawing-room she seated herself very quietly at the piano, commenced to run her fingers listlessly over its keys and then almost imperceptibly glided into that startling piece of music of her own composition which had so distressed her on Godfrey's first evening at Pondcourt House.

It sounded now though to be another piece of music, one that told throughout the same weird story that the other told, but one that seemed to tell it in another way.

The recklessness, gaiety, and defiance were

subdued. The character of the music did not change as heretofore—it was now from the beginning to the end singing softly of Eve's calm mournfulness.

Miss Witchwood did not fear that the music would excite or distress the player. She wished that it would. Eve's calmness terrified her.

When the ladies retired for the night Eve quietly held out her hand to Godfrey and raised her eyes to his. He took her hand, tried to appear natural, and blushed.

"Good night, Mr. Overside," she said. "Aunty told me this morning that you are going away from us in a few days to be married. I congratulate you very sincerely, and I wish happiness always. Good night!"

But when Eve reached her own room she fell on her knees and buried her face on the bed and tried to pray, but could not. Tears, silent tears, flowed instead of words, but this outburst of her grief had still the astounding calmness with it.

Miss Witchwood found her kneeling so, but did not know that she was crying until she raised her from her knees and gazed, when she kissed her, at her face; then she beheld those silent, bitter tears; and then she pressed her to her breast and stroked her golden hair.

"I will not see him again, aunty, excepting to say good bye. I will keep my own room, only please do not hasten his going because of that, dearest. I should like him to be here, about the house, as long as he can, do not hasten him away, do nothing that may make him suspect, because that would kill me, I think, aunty. Oh! I would like to see and kiss Miss Sheene. Find out her Christian name for me, aunty, so that I may speak to her like a sister when I am alone."

While Eve and Miss Witchwood were in Eve's bedroom Godfrey was in the dining-room alone, thinking deeply and smoking dreamily. As he was lighting a cigar Miss Witchwood, who had just said "Good night" to her niece, opened the door.

Godfrey turned round. They both smiled sadly. They both remembered at once that they had filled exactly the same positions in the room once before—on the first night of Godfrey's stay at Pondcourt House.

With her hand upon the door, as it had been then, she said what she had said on that occasion:

"One sentence, Mr. Overside."

She smiled again, stifled a sigh, and then left the door and spoiled the likeness.

"Eve will have no more drawing lessons," she said. "We have had a very serious conversation on this unfortunate matter, and, as you have seen, she is strangely calm. We think it better that she should remain in her own room until you are gone. You are, of course, to understand that the cause of her doing so is indisposition."

Godfrey bowed.

"In that case, then," he said, "there is no occasion for me to inconvenience you any longer. Shall I go to-morrow, Miss Witchwood?"

"I would rather you waited till the end of the week as we at first arranged, and for these reasons," she returned. "If you depart so suddenly you will arouse the curiosity of my servants, which is undesirable; and you will possibly arouse Eve's fears that a knowledge of her secret has hastened you, which is more than undesirable. Let us say Friday morning, Mr. Overside."

"Friday morning, Miss Witchwood. So be it then."

"And now good night," she said, adding, with a smile, "It is rather odd that your connection with Pondcourt House should end exactly as it commenced, by your being 'simply my guest till Friday.' Once more, good night."

Godfrey wrote a short letter that night to Annie, the composition of which seemed to be a difficulty to him, inasmuch as he spoiled several sheets of paper before he could fill one satisfactorily.

"I do not know, little woman," he wrote,

"whether you will cry or laugh at the grand piece of news I have to give you—possibly you may do both. Prepare yourself. I have thrown up my engagement here. I am coming to you on Friday for good. Full particulars when we meet, my darling. I suppose I ought to regard this as a misfortune, but I do not. It seems to me that money must have an objection to my bachelor pockets, that if we were to wait till the day before Doomsday I should still be penniless. Perhaps marriage would change our luck—shall we see? I know that you would be brave enough, and I think your mother would give her consent. Time is precious. Prudence is a humbug. Let us get married as soon as we can, and boldly risk the rest."

The letter to Annie was posted on Wednesday morning. She received it on Wednesday evening with the greatest delight; she cried, she laughed, she kissed her mother—as if her mother were the sole cause—she rushed into Godfrey's room and began at once to "put things right" for his return; she gossiped merrily to the little gold watch; she suggested a quantity of reasons for Godfrey's cancelling his engagement, all of which were more or less ridiculous and improbable; she suggested, also, countless edible surprises which were to be prepared in honour of his arrival; and she behaved altogether in a most remarkable manner, until from sheer exhaustion she was forced to sit down and declare with tears of joy in her eyes, and lovely smiles upon her face, that her pretty little head was engaged on some mysterious business which she designated "splitting."

Tom Sheene called on his mother and sister that evening, and was much surprised at Godfrey's throwing up his engagement, asked Annie if she knew the cause of his so doing, and when she told him that she did not he answered that it was "rather peculiar," and shortly after left them in a sullen state of mind.

That night he wrote a letter to the tall, slim beggar, which he addressed to him under the care of a certain stable-boy in a certain mews at E—

On Thursday morning, as there was to be no drawing lesson and as Eve, who remained as had been arranged in her own room, did not object to her aunt's short absence, Godfrey and Miss Witchwood went to the old Priory ruins.

In the evening Godfrey received a long, loving, Annie-like letter from Miss Sheene, a certain paragraph of which ran thus:

"So Noodles starts from nasty Pondcourt at eleven on Friday morning, and perhaps he is so glad to get back to a certain someone who thinks him so beautifully DETESTABLE that he does not know that he will have to change carriages—taking nearly twenty minutes to do it, so Tom says—at B— Junction. What of it? This of it, Noodles. There is a train—vide Bradshaw, which I understand now—that leaves Paddington at 11.55 a.m., which means five minutes before twelve in the morning. Something else of it, my only one—I have a holiday on Friday, an 'express special' holiday. Something else, darling—my 11.55 in the morning train reaches B— Junction just ten minutes before your train reaches it. Now then, what happens? Guess! Can't? I'll tell you. Why, when you get to B— Junction you will see waiting on the platform a very insignificant, heartless, IMPATIENT little woman, who owns a tiny gold watch, two perpen—(can't spell it) lines, and a very unpleasant young man, and if you are inclined and good you may finish your journey to London with her by your side. That's how I am going to spend my holiday. I don't mind traveling alone to B— a bit, I don't indeed, and I don't know what the people at the station will say—(see that blot? It's a tear of joy, Noodles)—so I think you had better say in a very loud voice when you see me, 'Ah! my sister. I have not seen her for fifty years,' because that would be some sort of excuse for making such a fuss—wouldn't it? To-morrow at B— Junction, my own darling."

Godfrey wrote a few hurried lines in reply, warmly applauding her proposal to meet him in the middle of the to-morrow's journey.

At eleven o'clock, after a dull, silent evening, he wished Miss Witchwood "good night" sadly—nay, almost solemnly, and then went to his room with a heavy heart.

"In twelve hours, I say to—to Pondcourt House, farewell for ever!"

(To be Continued.)

#### HOW NUTMEGS GROW.

NUTMEGS grow on little trees which look like little pear trees, and are generally not over twenty feet high. The flowers are very much like the lily of the valley. They are pale and very fragrant. The nutmeg is the seed of the fruit, and mace is the thin covering over the seed. The fruit is about as large as a peach. When ripe it breaks open and shows a little nut inside. The trees grow on the islands of Asia and tropical America. They bear fruit for seventy or eighty years, having ripe fruit upon them all the seasons. A fine tree in Jamaica has over 4,000 nutmegs on it every year.

The Dutch used to have all this nutmeg trade, as they owned the Banda Islands and conquered all the other traders, and destroyed the trees. To keep the price up they once burned three piles of nutmegs, each of which was as big as a church. Nature did not sympathise with such meanness. The nutmeg pigeon, found in all the Indian islands, did for the world what the Dutch had determined should not be done—carried those nuts, which are their food, into all the surrounding countries, and trees grew again, and the world had the benefit.

#### THE COLOURATION OF THE CAT.

THE colouration and markings of the domestic cat, as might be expected from its mixed origin, vary exceedingly. The wild *Felids*, which range in size from that of the lion and tiger down to the pretty rusty-coloured or rubiginous cat of India, which is only some 16 inches in length, excluding the tail, vary very much in colour, and also in the disposition of the marks, not only in the different animals but also in the same species. So much is this the case that no less than four or five supposed species have been made out of one, namely, the American ocelot; and the leopard and panther, though regarded by most naturalists as mere varieties of the same species, are popularly regarded as being distinct.

As such variations take place in well-defined species it is not surprising that they should occur in the mixed progeny of the smaller race which constitutes our domestic variety. Thus we have the tawny colour of the lion in the small Siamese domestic cat; the stripes of the tiger are reproduced in many tabbies, these stripes breaking up as they do more or less perfectly into spots, not only in many wild species but also in those cats that are shown as spotted tabbies at our cat shows. The little rubiginous cat, which has repeatedly interbred with the domestic cat, of India, is a good example of a spotted wild cat of small size.

The markings of the clouded tiger, *Felids macrocelis*, are reproduced in many of our varieties. The black variety of leopard, which occurs wild, has its analogue in our black cats, and some of the wild cats occupying the snow-covered mountains of India are almost white.

From the vagrant and nocturnal habits of cats there is more difficulty in breeding them true to any particular colour and marking than occurs in the case of most other domestic animals, but, nevertheless, much has been done in determining the transmission of colours, and some exceedingly interesting facts have been ascertained. The true tortoise-shell, as distinguished from the tortoise-shell and white, occurs only in the female (excepting in very rare instances); on the contrary, the red or sandy tabby marking, which is common in the male, is rare in the female. In fact, the sandy tabby male

may be regarded as the mate of the tortoise-shell female; by due care, however, both of these markings can be produced in the two sexes. In what is called the tortoise-shell and white, which occurs frequently in both sexes, the sandy and black are not mixed together, as occurs in the pure tortoise-shell, but separated into large patches of pure colour. In some pied cats there is a tendency to a symmetrical arrangement of colours; this is most noticeable in the black and white.

Another singular mixture of colours, which may be noticed occasionally, is the combination of grey tabby, red tabby, and white, the last being irregularly and variously distributed.

The long hair of the Angora breed is analogous to the natural variation sometimes occurring in wild species, as the woolly cheetah from South Africa, and the long-haired tigers of the north of Asia.

#### HOW CLOISONNE IS MADE.

To the lovers of Japanese art it may be interesting to know how the ware known as Shippo or Cloisonne, so much admired by the æsthetic lover of bric-à-brac, is made. The process of its manufacture is full of interest. It is instructive to note the infinite care and tedious painstaking necessary on the part of the operative, from the inception of the design until the final completion of the article.

The first thing is to fashion the shape of the vase, plaque, or whatever it may be, from sheet copper. This is done by brazing together pieces of copper that have been hammered into the required shape and then giving them the correct and artistic form to meet the idea of the designer. This is done by hand labour, all the lines being brought into harmony by the use of a wooden mallet.

After the article has been shaped it goes to the artist, who designs the ornamentation. He draws the outlines of the figure and scenes to be enamelled on its surface with a black pencil. Then it goes to the hands of the operatives, who affix the delicate copper wires that divide the innumerable shades of colour, and that are part of the design itself. An adhesive varnish is used by them to cause the delicate pieces of wire, which they apply with pincers, to remain in place. It is hardly possible to contemplate this process without feeling the heart ache at the tedious work, slow and precise as it of necessity must be.

When a portion of the design is thus laid on it goes to another set of men, who render the work permanent by applying with a pencil-brush a thin coating of porcelain between the delicate wire-work. Additional wire is then applied until the entire design is laid out. To look upon an ordinary piece of Shippo ware and attempt to count the pieces of wire that are placed upon it would appall one, but to think of cutting these minute pieces and applying them one by one will give a conception of patience that knows no weariness.

When the tracery work is complete the article goes to the persons who apply the porcelain. They are surrounded with cups of porcelain paints of all colours and shades, which they put with their delicate brushes into the wire tracery in accordance with their conception of the harmony of colour. Thus it is that no two pieces of this ware are duplicates. The designer of the ornamentation gives original conceptions, as his fancy moves him at the moment of drawing, the applier of the wire carries out his idea of filling in the outlines of the drawings with his infinitesimal pieces, and the man who applies the porcelain enamel is his own judge of the colours to be laid on.

When the article leaves the hand of the one who has put on the enamel it goes to the furnace and is there roasted. The surface, when it comes from the oven, is of course very rough and uneven, and it is sent to the polisher, where it is rubbed with a kind of sand and pumice stone until it is made smooth and lustrous as it is seen in its finished state.





["BEWARE OF WHAT MY HATE CAN DO FOR YOU."]

## POWER AND POVERTY.

A NEW NOVEL.

(BY OWEN LANDOR.)

### CHAPTER XXV.

#### BEHIND THE SCREEN.

Could I save him  
I should not love him better. I have fallen  
In my own thoughts for loving this soft stranger.

BEFORE trusting herself to look on poor Jack Cranbury again Peggy partook of her breakfast. She had no appetite, no desire to eat and drink, but she felt that she had trying work before her which could not be performed by one weak in either mind nor body. So she ate like one about to start upon a journey, feeling the need of laying in a store of strength.

Then she ventured to look again, and saw him standing by the window in an attitude similar to that in which Euphrosia found him. His back was towards her, but she knew the form as well as the face, and knew that it was he.

But to make sure she made a scratching noise, louder than usual, so that it attracted his attention, and as he turned she saw the familiar features, changed, but unmistakable.

"Shall I speak to him?" was her next thought; and her judgment answered in the affirmative.

Putting her lips to the opening she had made she was about to address him when the click of a lock fell upon her ears. Drawing back in alarm, fearing that Mrs. Barnes had unexpectedly returned, she was relieved to find her door still closed. It was to Jack Cranbury that the visit was being paid.

Curiosity led her back to her watching place. She was surprised to see a woman—beautiful in form and face and superbly dressed—standing

close to her young master, who appeared to be shrinking back with the instinctive fear of one who is repelled and knows not why. Peggy recognised the visitor, and her amazement increased.

"It is the count's sister," she thought. "Where, then, am I?—at Brocken Hall? So near home, while I thought myself many hundred miles away. Ah, madam, I have seen your beautiful face but once before, and I knew it was a mask for treachery. I must hear what you are saying."

Under ordinary circumstances Peggy would never have played the spy, but since she had undertaken the task of a private detective—that is soon after Jack Cranbury disappeared—she had broken ground in this respect. She had no hesitation in listening on this occasion.

"You do not appear glad to see me," Euphrosia said.

"Glad," he replied. "Do you think there is any joy in my heart?"

"There should be," replied Euphrosia, "when I tell you that all is prepared for giving you freedom."

His face instantly changed, eager hope lighting it up with a new life. He seized Euphrosia's hand.

"Dear lady," he said, "do not jest with me. My freedom! Do you know what those words are to me?"

"A promise of life."

"True! And if they should be deceiving?"

"A sentence of death."

"Not so. I could bear that. It would be sending me back to a living tomb from which for the moment you have raised me."

"I tell you," said Euphrosia, speaking low but so clearly that Peggy, whose hearing was very acute, heard every word, "that I have prepared everything for our flight."

"Our flight!" repeated he; and again there was that involuntary shrinking to be seen in him.

"I must go with you," she said, looking at him with a softness that would have touched

most men's hearts. "To remain would be to bring death or worse upon myself. And more—I am tired of my life here—I hate it. Such womanhood as there is left in me is daily and hourly outraged by the proffered love of a man whom I loathe. You will be rich again when you are free; you will be able to protect me—to hide me from my brother's vengeance—and—if you will—you may learn to love me."

She paused, waiting for him to answer, but he stood silent, with a look of pained embarrassment on his face. Slowly her features darkened with the shadow of anger, and hot words, speaking of her birth in the sunny south, burst from her lips.

"Why do you pause? Is the love of woman, the proffered love of woman, a thing to be despised? Is my love, above all, to meet with the chilly winds of rejection? Am I repelling to the eye? Is there anything so loathsome in my form that you would prefer a life HERE to freedom and sunshine with ME?"

"You do not understand me," he replied. "I am deeply sensible of all you offer me, but if I am to have my freedom at all I must be wholly free."

"Explain yourself," she said, imperiously.

"I must be free to return to my home and friends—"

"And to your own love?"

"Untrammelled by any promises."

"That is," said Euphrosia, with eyes that flashed forth fire, "untrammelled by me? I am to do all the dangerous work of opening your prison doors, to risk my life, so that you may walk out free to return to that baby-face girl you think you love."

"Whom I DID love in the time that now seems so far away," said Jack, passing his hand over his forehead in the weary way he had fallen into. "I can hardly tell whether I have any love or hate left in me. I have so long felt as if I were one of the dead."

"The girl may have forgotten you?"

"Perhaps."

"She may have married another?"

"Why should she waste her young life in waiting for me? But I must know if all this is true before I leave my post of honour. I vowed to be true to her while I lived."

"Will my word convince you that all I have said is true?" Euphrosia asked.

"I have no right to doubt you," he replied, "but I must hear it from her lips."

"Not here then," said Euphrosia, with a sudden fury, that was like the sweeping up of a tropical storm. "Wear out your young life inch by inch in solitude. Pine alone, dreaming of a liberty that shall never be yours, until your reason fails, and when you have become a babbling idiot we will send you back to her so that she may have her own true love again."

His face grew terrible in its paleness; it had been pale enough before, alas! and he shuddered, but answered her, quietly:

"Love is a thing," he said, "that cannot be conjured up by a word or destroyed by wishing. You expect too much. You blame me for what I am powerless to alter."

"Will you try to love me?" she asked. "Shame on me as a woman for speaking to you as I do, but you too must be merciful to me. See, I am cool now, and as you say love cannot be put aside by a wish. I saw you many months ago, before you came here, and I liked your ways. There was more sunshine in you than I have seen in a man before."

"If you loved me for that you must hate me now. It is all gone."

"No, it is only clouded over for a time. I will remove that cloud. Come, you will listen to me—"

"No," he replied, with a proud look; "I will not accept freedom on such terms. The love you ask I can never give you."

"Die then!" she hissed, with her two hands clenched. "Linger on here and beware of what my hate can do for you. Bah! Why should I lose myself in railing at such a boy? What is there in your face that I should love you? I have but jested. The time has been a little weary on my hands and I came here to amuse myself. It has been a good play. Ha, ha! Good boy, pretty boy—good bye! You will see Euphrosia no more; but she will take care that she is remembered. Good bye, pretty boy—good bye! Ha, ha! It has been an excellent jest surely."

Backing and bowing with mock courtesy she departed, leaving him standing like one suddenly frozen—the image of amazement and despair.

"Now what may all this mean?" he mused; "is it one of those visions that have haunted me in this prison, or a terrible reality? Was it woman or fiend that left me?"

The question he asked was to be solved at a future time. Left in doubt and amazement Jack Cranbury paced up and down the room terribly agitated. He was like a stream of water long grown sluggish suddenly lashed into unwonted activity by a storm.

Freedom had been offered him and it was a thing he had prayed for with many groans and tears. But freedom at such a price—how could he accept it? What would it be worth if he could not return to his home as he had left it—the affianced husband of Janet?

"The bondage," he muttered, "that she proposed would be more than this solitary confinement. No, I will live on here until the end comes, if the end of my life is to be here."

"Mr. John! Mr. John!"

It was a strangely sounding voice, and yet not wholly strange to him; that fell upon his ear. He glanced hurriedly round the room and saw nothing.

"Mr. John! Mr. John! I don't be startled; it is me—Peggy Murch. I am a prisoner like yourself behind the partition here, and I am trying to work my way through. Look down in the corner here."

Peggy had made the hole big enough to thrust three of her fingers through, and Jack, in a transport of astonishment and delight at the bare idea of having somebody near him whom he knew, knelt down and kissed them.

"You mustn't do that, Mr. John," said Peggy,

hastily withdrawing her hand. "I'm only a servant, you know. Here, take this bit of iron, sir, and help me to cut a way through."

"But when it is done, Jenny, they will find us out."

"I've hidden my work on this side with my bed. You must do the same, sir."

"But, Peggy, is it really you? and how came you here?"

"We are both in the hands of a big villain, sir—the Count Orsera."

"In his hands?" exclaimed Jack. "Why, he was my friend and Percy Wharton's!"

"The last party, sir, is Lord Mowbray now, and he's in it too; he's in it with the count, because he wanted Miss Janet; but she won't look at him—"

"My God!" exclaimed Jack. "I see it all now. What treachery and infamy! And you say, Peggy, that my Janet won't look at him?"

"Wouldn't look at him at any price, sir, or at anybody, although they do think you are dead; but don't let us waste time in talking yet; we can do that when we get outside. Work away, sir, and keep your ears open for those who are outside."

"All right, Peggy," said Jack, who seemed suddenly to have returned to his old self. "You take that side and I this and we will have a doorway open before you can say Jack Robinson."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### KINDRED SPIRITS.

Drink and be glad, sirs,  
Laugh and be gay,  
Keep sober to-morrow,  
But drink to-day.

There are certain natures which are so much in harmony with each other that as soon as they come within responding distance of each other they sound the sweet, melodious note of friendship and become bound to each other so long as they both sojourn in this vale of tribulation which we call the world.

They meet, look upon each other, and recognising a kindred spirit link or mingle themselves together and part no more until the undertaker's friend, King Death, steps in between them.

Of such were Job Murch and Reuben Stark.

No two men could be more closely allied in spirit, and, in a physical sense, they were worthy of each other. Both were reserved, taciturn men, given to showing the rougher side of their natures to the public eye, and in point of manly beauty there was not a pin to choose between them.

Murch personally despised men who were "womanish," and Reuben with instinctive gallantry thought it "impudent" on the part of any male creature to be otherwise than ugly.

It was women who had to look pretty, as a matter of duty, but a man was out of his "spear" when he indulged in a good figure and a handsome face.

"Unless it is the gentry," he would say, "and then good looks all round is right enough."

Reuben was one of the few chance customers of the Big Find. Never insensible to the palatable charms of a glass of ale, he could not pass its door without indulging in a modest pint of malt liquor, and dropping in on the morning of Murch's arrival he found himself face to face with one who was hereafter to be a bosom friend.

The meeting of these two men was remarkable, like the meetings of all remarkable men.

Murch, when Reuben came into the little parlour, was sitting by the fire cogitating, and assisting his cogitations with those two great assistants—beer and tobacco.

Reuben ordered a "pint and a screw" and sat down on the other side of the hearth.

Thus drawn together by the mysterious magnetism which makes true friends, they looked straight at each other, raised their mugs of ale at the same moment, bent forward and clinked them together and finally drank deep—in fact to the very bottom.

"Me to you," said Reuben, drawing a deep breath.

"And me to you," replied Murch, breathing hard, like a grampus.

"I'll fill again," said Reuben, rising.

"No, you don't," insisted Murch, "I'll fill by your leave."

A friendly struggle took place, which ended in Reuben yielding.

"It don't matter," he said. "I shall get my turn when we've finished that lot."

The mugs being refilled they sat smoking in silence for five minutes, both with their eyes intent upon the fire and deeply thinking. Murch was the first to come out of his reverie.

"Old chap," he said, "I like you."

"The feeling," replied Reuben, "is mutual."

"Your name?"

"Reuben Stark! And yours?"

"Job Murch."

"Let's drink to each other."

Again the mugs clinked, and once more these good men and true drank until the bottoms were visible to the naked eye. Then Reuben summoned Dan and had them refilled.

"Confidence being 'established 'tween us," he said, as he refilled his pipe, "and honour being understood—what brought you down to these parts. Not to get a livin' I hope."

"No," replied Murch. "I came here to find out all about The Hollows!"

Reuben started, and pushing back his chair stared at his new friend.

"And what may The Hollows be to you?" he asked.

"Bear a while," said Murch, also refilling his pipe. Such perfect love and harmony had been established between them that one had only to do a thing for the other to immediately follow him. "It's a longish story and a painful one—"

"Tra, la, la—tra, la, la. On yonder rock reclining—"

"Why, what's that?" asked Reuben.

"Hush!" said Murch, pale with excitement. "It's him—singing outside—he's coming this way. Push the door to a bit, I don't want to be seen. Not as I'm afraid of him, but I don't want it to be known that I'm here."

Reuben obeyed, and the door with a motion of his foot was sufficiently closed to hide them in the parlour from anybody in the bar, and yet allowing Murch to hear all that passed.

The singer was the count, who was out for a walk, and having lost his way had come in to make inquiries.

Dan was in the bar, and as soon as he saw who his visitor was he changed colour. The count gaily and urbanely recognised him.

"Ah, my friend of the drags and ropes," he said, "so the great reward has brought you here—"

"Hush, my lord!" said Dan, with a vague notion of the count's rank, as he glanced at the parlour door, "don't speak of THAT here."

"Not at all, if you don't wish it. But I had the pleasure of being present when you came to take your little fortune and I am interested in you. I rejoice to find that I have you for a neighbour. It is always pleasant to meet with old friends."

Dan remained silent—doubtful of the real nature of the count's visit, but he was soon relieved from all anxiety.

"I have lost my way," the count continued. "Which is the road to The Hollows?"

"I don't know, my lord," replied Dan, shaking his head, "but there's a man inside as might tell you."

"Go out to him," hurriedly muttered Murch, "he mustn't come in here or see me."

Reuben promptly got up and sauntered out just as Dan was coming into the parlour. He was a total stranger to the count, who asked for the information he needed, and obtained it, but not before Reuben had taken complete stock of him from head to heel.

"Bad" was his mental comment, as the count, having lighted a cigar, sauntered out, "not an inch of good ground in you."

Reuben feigned leaving, then suddenly changing his mind returned to Murch, and Dan leaving



the bar to clean the windows outside, a long and confidential conversation took place between the pair. Towards the end it got a little foggy in its details, but the main points were clear.

"We hunt together," said Murch, as their hands met at parting.

"Together," replied Reuben, swaying unsteadily on his legs. "But I say, old chap, you must keep sober for thish work."

"Jes' what goin' to say to you," replied Murch, also unsteady on his legs, "and we begin to-night."

"To-night as soon as the moon is up—half-arter ten."

Another grip of the hand and looks of sagacity, to which the profound expression of face adopted by the prime minister on the night of an important division would have been very small beer, and they parted, Murch promptly falling asleep before the fire, and Reuben sailing up the road like a vessel indifferently handled making her way before a head wind.

The confidence between the new friends had been mutual. Reuben also confided to Murch all he knew or suspected about The Hollows, and they agreed that where so much suspicion existed there must be good grounds for it. Murch was very positive about the matter.

At eleven o'clock, or thereabouts, that night, the two men were creeping up the Ghaunt bent upon getting close to the house where Count Orsera now dwelt, and they were so far successful that they got within sight of it; but at the bottom of the Ghaunt they came upon a huge mastiff prowling about, evidently on guard. He scented them immediately, and with gleaming, angry eyes came towards them.

Murch was imbued with the cookney's horror of a big dog, and he was disposed to act in the cookney fashion when he unexpectedly came near one prowling about in no amiable mood. He would have run away, but Reuben in a hurried whisper bade him stand his ground.

"To turn tail," he said, "is certain death. You've got a stick. Be ready to use it."

Murch was armed with a fair specimen of a shillalegh, originally intended for the head of any man who might be disposed to ask him impertinent questions. This he now grasped firmly, with his eye fixed upon the approaching dog.

Reuben had a stick too, but he did not trust to it. Holding that in his left hand he drew a knife, such as hunters use to give the coup de grace to a deer run down, from his pocket and opened it with his teeth.

"Now," he said, "we are ready, but we'll try suasion first."

"He won't heed that," replied Murch, with a low groan.

"Then we'll fight him," said Reuben, "I'm more used to such beastesses, and I'll draw him off you. When he springs at me hit him over the paws. A dog lamed on both fore feet is done for."

"I'll do my best," muttered Murch, who was very much in the position of a hunter when he meets his first lion, "but don't trust too much to me."

"Good dog," said Reuben. "Lie there; good fellow."

The dog snarled, showing his teeth, and Murch thought how admirably his mouth was furnished for cracking bones. He trembled in every limb, but he stood his ground and poised the shillalegh ready for active service.

"Good fellow," said Reuben, again, "gently, Lion or Pompey. I wish I knew your name. Look out, Job!"

The dog came on him with a mighty bound, and with a quick hand he had the brute by the throat. Murch struck out, but was rather wild in his aim and bestowed upon Reuben's scapula the first two blows meant for the dog.

Fortunately the head of the stable-helper was of Nature's strongest materials, calculated to resist any pressure or any blow not absolutely irresistible, and beyond the momentary inconvenience of the pain, and seeing blue and red lights dancing before his eyes, he did not suffer.

But he remonstrated in no measured terms, indulging in language usually tabooed in polite

society, and Murch, getting cooler, striking the dog upon the paws, he collapsed instantly.

"That's right," muttered Reuben, as he turned the dog over upon his back with a mighty effort. "Now feel in my pockets here for a bit of whipcord and tie his paws together. He's too good a dog to be killed. That's it. I see you can make a knot—"

"That's my foreign parcel knot," said Murch, "warranted not to come undone—once tied it must be cut."

"He's as good as helpless now," said Reuben, "but he will howl if we leave him. We must tie his jaws. There's a strap in my trousers pocket—two perhaps. Put one over his mouth, and then we will get his hind legs together."

In such skilful hands the dog was soon made helpless, and they dragged him behind some bushes, where he lay with his eyes flashing defiance and hate. Reuben examined the fastenings and proved them all safe.

"They trusted in that dog," he said. "I recognise him now. It belongs to a chap named Barnes, who's a sort of loafer, poacher and thief mixed—a bad lot whether he is on his head or his heels. I guess he's got a job here."

"What are we to do now?" asked Murch, who was a good follower but a poor leader in such work.

"We'll try the doors and windows," replied Reuben, "and if we can get in we'll go over the house and see who's in it."

"And suppose they hear us?"

"Then we'll run for it."

"And if they catch us?"

"We'll fight," said Reuben, ferociously; "and I think two men who could master that dog ought not to be afraid of anything."

"Who's afraid?" said Murch, inspired by the dogged courage of his companion.

They moved towards the house, keeping under the shadow when they could, and hurrying across such patches of moonlight as they were unable to avoid, and presently stood by the porch, where they halted for a moment's rest.

"All the lower windows with iron bars, and new fixed," whispered Reuben. "That's Barnes's work. He used to be a handy chap at the forge afore he took to rascality."

"I think I hear somebody inside," said Murch.

They were both silent, listening intently. Murch was right—somebody was moving softly about the hall, and that somebody was Barnes, who, although not on duty that night, was looking round to see that the house was all right.

It was Mrs. Barnes's birthday, and in celebration thereof both Barnes and his wife had been drinking; but he was not drunk. The keeper, under the influence of drink, would get more stolid, dogged and sullen, but his brains were seldom overcome by strong drink. Perhaps he had no brains to overcome.

Anyhow there he was—after partaking of the best part of a bottle of gin—gliding about the partially moonlit hall trying doors and windows and hovering about in a careless sort of way while he waited for his brother keeper, who had just gone downstairs to get his supper and beer prior to going on guard at the door of the prisoner's room.

That was a dirty never neglected. The count's orders were imperative—one of them was to be always on guard, and Barnes, strictly obedient, was waiting for the other to return.

He had reached the hall door in his examination when suddenly the slouching gait and semi-careless demeanour, which had been marked in him hitherto, changed, and he became all attention. There were whisperings outside.

"Now who the deuce is that?" he muttered.

For a moment a slight suspicion of the faithfulness of Mrs. Barnes flashed upon him, but he cast it aside as unworthy of him and her. She had none of the weaknesses of her sex, and was an open scorner of sentiment. She never professed any love for Barnes, and never showed any. It was not likely then that she would open her ears to an unlawful wooer.

"It's spies," he muttered, "that's what it is. But where's Tearem?"

Tearem was the mastiff, who had so unex-

pectedly come to grief, and he was a dog his master relied upon. He could be trusted, and, barring poison and powder and shot, Barnes thought him a match for any man, or almost any number of men.

"There is somebody outside," he muttered, "and I fancy they are somewhere up the walk. I'll just have a peep at 'em. Perhaps it's only the count having a late cigar."

The bolts were well oiled, and Barnes drew them back very softly, but not so softly that he made no noise at all. Those outside heard him, and were prepared.

"It's only one man," whispered Reuben, as he and Murch drew back into the shade, "and when he puts his head out hit it."

"Trust me," muttered Murch, who with the sense of having played a somewhat ignominious part in the fight with Tearem was burning to distinguish himself.

Raising his shillalegh he awaited the opening of the door with bated breath, and presently out popped the head of Barnes to receive a whack that did the work the gin failed to perform and stretched him senseless.

"Well," said Reuben, with a smile of satisfaction, "I couldn't have done it better myself. Give 'un another—we may want 'un to lie quiet a bit."

"But I may kill him," said Murch, doubtfully.

"Kill 'un," replied Reuben, contemptuously, "not a bit of it. The stick isn't grown that would crack his skull. Lay on, and the most 'ee can do is to daze 'un a bit."

As Murch still hesitated, violence being a little out of his line, Reuben gave Barnes the requisite crack on the head, hard enough to keep most men quiet for ever. But in justice to the old man it must be stated that he knew his man and had a conviction that half a dozen such blows would leave him with a fair share of life inside his hulking body.

"Now draw 'un outside," said Reuben, "and leave 'un there. He's good for an hour or so."

They passed into the hall, gently closing the door behind them, and leaving it so that it could be readily opened in case they had to beat a retreat. Then for a moment they stood side by side debating in whispers which way they should go—straight on ahead or down to the left.

"To the left, I should say," said Reuben. "It looks to me as if it led to the cellars, and if anybody is kept confined it's most likely there they would be put at night."

"Downstairs," said Murch; and thither they bent their steps.

The way they had taken led to the cellars, but it first led to the kitchen, where Mrs. Barnes was engaged in the domestic duty of "clearing up" before she sought the repose she had so well earned. Seated by the table was the second keeper, a man as big as Barnes, but apparently of a more pliable nature.

He was a big, yellow-headed booby, such as can be found in any village—lazy, fond of beer, and the tool of any man who would give him plenty to eat and drink. He had all he needed at The Hollows, and he signed for no more.

Mrs. Barnes had quick ears, having used them well during her life, and as she moved to and fro she heard a slight sound in the passage outside. It was Murch suddenly tripping against the heels of Reuben.

In a moment she had the door open and stood face to face with the intruders, who were agast at the flood of light suddenly let out upon them. Mrs. Barnes acted with the promptitude which had ever been one of the strong features of her character.

Seizing them, one in each hand, she brought them together with a sounding crash, just as she used to serve the confiding yokels in her professional days, and then dragged them into the kitchen in a state of semi-stupefaction.

"I don't know who you are or what you want," she said, "but I've caught you and I mean to keep you. Barnes will be down in a minute and he'll settle the business, whatever it may be that brought you here."

(To be Continued.)

## BIRDIE'S JOURNAL.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

OCTOBER.—Why should I not keep a journal, as other girls do? I have little to amuse me, and writing may while away some miserable hours, although the most important fact that I shall ever record is that I am my mother's unloved daughter. She would deny it if she could; but it is true, nevertheless. I am little, ugly and brown, totally unlike my sisters, and she is ashamed of me. And she cannot forgive me for being the innocent cause of father's death; for it was while rescuing me from drowning that he lost his own life; and from that hour Mrs. Leland has looked upon me with positive aversion.

Occasionally her hatred finds vent in words. "That child mine!" she will say, looking superbly handsome in her scorn. "That little imp, with eyes, hair and face of the same dull brown; that wild, reckless fright my child? She a sister to my proud Florence and my beautiful Clara!"

Then that angers me, and I say just what I know will shock her the most.

"I'll bet on mother. We are so proud of each other."

Well, mother had her two lady daughters to educate, and I was neglected. Here I am, aged seventeen, and so ignorant! Music is my only accomplishment, achieved by my own hard work. Am I wild, reckless? Do I care for nothing? Have I no heart? Mother, mother! Never mind the education and fine clothes you give the other girls—only love me. I am very unhappy.

OCTOBER 13.—It is a beautiful night, and there is a dinner-party downstairs. I went and peeped into the room through one of the windows. The butler kindly drew aside the curtain, and I watched the people. Mother looked dignified and handsome as usual. Beautiful Clara flirted with a little man with a big head, and Florence talked big words. I felt amused, and was intently watching all I saw when something caused me to look directly in front of me, when I met the gaze of the loveliest blue eyes, looking very roguish as their owner smiled at me. I hate that man! I wonder who he is, and if he will tell mother of my escapade? I don't care—yes, I think I do care! I wonder if I am very ugly.

OCTOBER 20.—I have been crying all day. I don't know why, or that there need be any reason except that I am what I am. No one loves me—well, can't I live anyway?

To-day mother said that Mr. Carson is very much in love with Florence. I wonder who he is? I admire his taste. He is coming this evening, and I shall look through the window. He must be a remarkably brilliant man, to be taken in by—let me see: twenty yards of velvet, a pair of satin slippers, two helpless white hands, false curls, a false complexion, and big words.

I met the school children yesterday morning, and we had a nice race ever so far down the road. Just as I passed one of the big boys I ran against a gentleman. I looked up to meet an earnest, amused glance from deep, dark blue eyes—the very same. Strong hands kept me from falling, the kindest of voices asked:

"You are not hurt?"  
"Am I not?"  
"I hope you are not."  
"Do you?"  
"You certainly are vexed. Why so angry? Did I beat you in the race?"  
"You! Let me pass!"

"One moment. Are you crying? Pardon me, I have seen you before."

It was mean, awfully mean, to refer to that evening of the dinner-party.

"Sir, I believe you have been so unfortunate. The fact is, when people are too ignorant and

ugly to be invited into parlours, they must peep at grand gentlemen like yourself."

Then I passed him. Yes, I am sure that I hate that man. I believe I am not even so happy as I used to be.

OCTOBER 21.—Why did I care who loved Florence? What demon prompted me to look into the window to meet his eyes, that gazed on me with contempt?

DECEMBER 25.—It has been a long, long day, but now it is night, and the cold moonbeams fall upon the white world. What have I done? I have been out in the beautiful snow all day nearly. I took a long walk over the fields, and I met Mr. Carson. He said:

"Pardon me, but we have met so often, will you not tell me who you are?"

"Sir, in a moment of thoughtlessness someone called me Birdie, perhaps in the hope that I would fly away; but I never did. Yes, my name is Birdie, and, strange as you may think it, I am my mother's daughter."

Then I passed him swiftly, with a scornful look into the wondering eyes—beautiful, earnest eyes.

APRIL 10.—The days have dragged along; it is such a cold, rainy, dark world. If it were not for music I think I should die, and that would be dreadful, as I am such a bright light in society. They say Mr. Carson is devoted to Florence; she sings to him (poor man!); she talks to him too. Mother seems delighted, and I am glad she is happy. But does Florence's heart throb when she meets the earnest gaze of those tender, bright blue eyes? Florence has no heart, but she is a lady, and so, of course, he loves her. I wonder if he will be ashamed because I am mother's daughter?

MAY 26.—Mother said some hard, hard words to me to-day.

"Reckless, ignorant little imp, the curse of my life!"

It was too much.

"Mother," I answered, "tell me what to do and I am ready, for I love you, mother."

"Love me—you? Stay where I will not see you—leave me!"

My heart never ached till to-day; I think I never wept till then. Blind with tears I hastened away, down in the meadow, where, by the pretty lake, I flung myself on the wet grass, and laid my hot face on the little white daisies.

I may have been there hours, I do not know nor care, but a kind hand lifted my head, and a tender voice said:

"You are in trouble."

"Mr. Carson!"

"Yes."

"Leave me!"

"Not till you tell me what is the matter, Miss Leland."

"You know me!"

"I have known you for a long time. But tell me why you weep and tremble like this."

"If you must know then listen: my lady mother hates me!"

I repeated my mother's words, and saw the man's face turn pale and the blue eyes flash.

"Do women talk like that to their daughters?"

"Yes. And sisters hate each other, and God's world is full of misery and despair. There's not a man or woman or child living that I do not hate!"

"Hush! that is horrible!"

"Yes, and so is life!"

"But let me be your friend."

"I have no friends—I want none!"

"Child, this is wrong."

"Life is all wrong; and I hate you with the rest."

I left him then. I must not meet him again. Why did I say that? Oh, mother, mother. How your unreasonable hate has embittered my heart and life. Could I help it that poor papa died—that I am not beautiful?

The wind blows gently, swinging the tender leaves; the moon in the bright heavens smiles at two people walking up and down among the daisies; and Florence looks up proudly into her lover's face. The picture is exceedingly pretty. Do pictures ever break hearts?

JUNE 13.—It is a beautiful world to-day, but

not for me. I have been ill, and have not seen them—mother, I mean, and HIM.

JULY 8.—Oh, I have been very ill! Mother came to my door twice a day, and the doctor comes to see me. The girls are away from home. I am tired, so tired that I cannot write. I would like to see the lake to-day, bright with July sunshine.

SEPTEMBER 30.—I have not been well for months, and, oh, my life has been so dreary! My face is thin and so white! Sometimes I wish mother would look at me.

OCTOBER 2.—Two men passed under my window to-day. One was Mr. Carson. The other said:

"Guy, is it true that you love Miss Leland?"

"Yes, it is true."

"But, Guy, my friend, she cares for nothing but fashion and flirtation."

"You are wrong, my little sweetheart cares for neither."

Ah, me! Poor Guy! Happy Florence!

OCTOBER 6.—Yesterday, weak and ill though I was, tired of my room I managed to slip downstairs and go down in the meadow by the lake. Ah, it was lovely! The wind blew the maple leaves into the water; autumn leaves brilliant and beautiful swept over the white sand. I had been ill so long and was so happy to be in the meadow again that I did not notice how fast the clouds gathered, nor did I care, for the storm at my heart was greater than any other could be.

When I started for home I fell back weak and helpless, and lay there on the sand. Ere long the raindrops began to fall. Cold, cruel rain! I thought I was dying, I could not move. Then I heard voices, startled, frightened voices, and knew someone was bending over me, and then he spoke, as he brushed the leaves from my cold face:

"Birdie Leland! My God, she is dead—and this is her mother's work! A proud, heartless woman ashamed of this sweet, innocent, unhappy child! Birdie! And I loved you so! Little one, hear me—speak!"

"Guy," said another voice, "and is this the Miss Leland you love, this pretty, white-faced child who lies here dead?"

"Dead! Birdie—love!"

And then, with his kisses on my lips and his arms around me, I opened my eyes on the brightest hope of a woman's life—the man she loves. With someone to love and someone to live for my eyes met his—blue and beautiful and full of tenderness:

"Love, forgive!" and fainted again.

The next thing I remember I lay in my own room, and only mother was with me; she was kneeling beside my bed, and she put her arms around me and sobbed:

"My daughter!"

In that blessed moment the past was forgotten, and our hearts were united at last.

DECEMBER 24.—This evening I stood beside my husband in a crowded room, and my dear mother, cold and scornful no longer, touched tenderly my bridal dress, and whispered:

"Birdie, you are very lovely."

And my husband bent his head to kiss her cheek, and said:

"God bless her mother's daughter!"

## FACETIÆ.

## THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF IMPORTANCE.

MRS. BROWN: "We are having some friends to dine with us on the twenty-fourth, Mr. Green, and want you to come and help to wait at table, as usual."

THE FAMILY GREENGROVER: "On the twenty-fourth, ma'am? I'm sorry to say I'm engaged on the twenty-fourth."

MRS. BROWN: "Dear me! How unfortunate! We are so accustomed to you, and you know our ways."

MR. GREEN: "Yes, ma'am. Couldn't you write and put off your friends till the week after, ma'am?"

Punch.



"It may be months, darling, before we meet again," he said, squeezing her hand as if that grip were his last; "mountains and valleys will divide us, forests and prairies, perhaps the river of death itself. Can I do anything more than I have done to make you cherish my memory and keep your love for me unchanged?" "Oh, yes," she exclaimed, choking down the sobs, "buy me a box of tortoise-shell hairpins before you start."

A SON-IN-LAW is in a railway carriage with his wife, his mother-in-law, and a friend. Stung by a wasp, he lets the insect escape unharmed. "What!" says his friend, "why don't you kill that wasp?" The son-in-law, in a low voice, with the smile of a Mephistopheles, replies "Perhaps he will sting my mother-in-law."

THE following is told of a young gentleman who was passing an examination in physics. He was asked: "What planets were known to the ancients?" "Well, sir," he responded, "there were Venus and Jupiter, and"—after a pause—"I think the earth, but I'm not certain."

GETTING TO BE A GREAT BORE.—That Channel Tunnel. Funny Folks.

WELL PRESERVED. VICE-CHANCELLOR BACON has reached his eighty-fourth year. And not yet rusty. Funny Folks.

HORSES ON A NEW FOOTING. It is felony to "nail" a horse in one sense; it ought to be so to nail them in any sense. Only brutal ignorance gives horses shoes. Why even make them slippers? At the best an iron shoe becomes a clog. Horses in shoes are about as handy with their feet as women in pattens. The horse is given a hoof sufficient in strength with a frog of the utmost service. The farrier pares the frog and impairs the hoof, takes infinite pains to give infinite pain, and thinks he improves upon Nature. Dolt! In any case two shoes would be sufficient for the horse's fore feet. Those behind should be left as they were before. To drive a horse fairly does not include driving nails into him. Let there be no more "ard ammering of 'orses 'oooves," but let us adopt the Yankee motto "Shoe fly"—and never come back, not even as a pattern for a breast-pin. Funny Folks.

ADVICE TO A LEADING ACTOR.—"Study the temper of the House a little more, William, and don't gag!" Punch.

"SMALL AND EARLY."—The lark. Punch.

"COMING EVENTS, &c." NORTH COUNTRY MAGNATE (to tenant farmer): "Well, Mr. Cluff, so we're going to have an election. How do you—hum?—what do you—think about it?"

DALESMAN (warily): "Think about it, sir? Whaay I thinks I shall be shakkin' hands wi' some great folks varry shortly!" Punch.

LATEST FROM THE SMOKING-ROOM.—In the House of Commons all Obstructionists are known as the Jambos. Punch.

JUMBO is no longer young—therefore, he is (s)old. Pity 'twas the Council of the Zoological Gardens could not conjure up a single Regent Spark of kindly feeling in their corporate breast and save this elephant-astic brute from being "Driven from Home." Could this poor creature give expression to his emotions and indeed would be the reproachful farewell conveyed to his disloyal masters in gentle but tusk-y tones. But a truce to sentiment, let him pack his trunk; we did but chest! Moonshine.

INCON-ISTENT. A CORRESPONDENT who signs himself "Old Bachelor" has sent us what he terms another proof of the inconsistency of the female sex. He says a woman never gets in a temper without getting out of temper. Judy.

FIRST OBTAIN YOUR HARE. (Comic cookery.)

WHAT is the difference between a hairdresser and a depilatory?—Why, one makes hair-dye and the other makes hair die. Judy.

# MUSICAL.

WHY is Marwood like a first-class musician?—Because he fully appreciates the value of a good chord, and has composed a number of things upon one string (at the end of it). Judy.

## A FACT FOR DARWIN.

THE fogs that of late so severely taxed our tempers and constitutions must in all fairness be credited with a contribution to the cause of natural history. Did they not reproduce for us the missing-link-boy? Judy.

## A DEATH WARRANT.

LADY CUSTOMER (hesitating over purchase): "Dear me, Mr. Higgs, this fowl looks as if it had died a natural death."

POULTERER (readily): "I'll warrant yer it did, ma'am, for I killed it meself." Fun.

AN OWNER-IOUS DUTY.—Receiving rents. Fun.

## A CURE FOR ELEPH-ANTICS.

THE correspondent who wrote to Mr. Barnum's agent in England to ask him why he did not pack up Jumbo and remove him to the docks in his own trunk is requested by that gentleman to give him a call. Fun.

BEST TREATMENT FOR THE POOR.—Drive a steak into them. If that is not enough, chop them. Fun.

# THE TWO SUITORS.

## CHAPTER I.

"MARK my words, Stella Forsyth, if you marry Jack Lindsay you'll rue the day. It's queer enough that you prefer him to Frank Reardon—there's a man now that any girl might be proud of."

"Well, I don't imagine that there are many girls who wouldn't be proud of Jack Lindsay. I'm sure I am. Frank Reardon is well enough, but he can't compare with Jack;" and pretty Stella Forsyth tossed her head in disdain.

"Now, Stella," and good Mrs. Dunbar's voice sank to an impressive tone, "you are making a great mistake and I'm sorry for it, child, for I want to see you happy. I've worked for you and watched over you for ten years now, since your father and mother died—"

"I know you have, aunt," interrupted Stella, softly.

"Yes, and it's natural that I should take your future welfare to heart. Now I don't want to be unjust to Jack Lindsay, but I've seen him grow up and his father before him, and I tell you, Stella, that he's not to be depended upon. Hush! just wait till I've had my say. His morals are good enough, as far as I know, and he's kind-hearted and all that, but he's 'whiffle-minded'—he never knows one week what he'll want the next, and if he promises you anything you can never feel sure that he'll keep his word."

"Oh! yes, I can, aunt," interposed Stella, hastily. "His promises are sacred. I know it."

"Child, you think so now, but you'll find out to the contrary if you persist in marrying him, when you might do so much better. Frank Reardon is very different from Jack. He's worked hard from a boy in the face of trying circumstances, determined to be somebody, and there's not another young man anywhere around who stands a better chance of making his mark in the world than he does."

"Why, he's poor as Job's turkey, aunt; and Jack has never wanted for money. They have everything in splendid shape at his father's. I don't see how you can think that Frank's prospects are better than Jack's."

"Because Jack's father never lifted his finger to earn a penny of the money that you speak of—it all came to Mrs. Lindsay from an aged relative, and Jack has the same 'happy-go-lucky'

disposition, consequently he won't be likely to exert himself as a man should to win a comfortable home and competence for his family. He may come to want yet. Frank Reardon relies on his two strong hands and his brains for a livelihood, and he is using them to good advantage. He was not ashamed to lay hold of anything that would help him along, and now he is junior partner in a well-known law firm, and without a doubt he will work his way upward to fame and prosperity. Ten years from now, if I don't miss my guess, he will be the richer of your two suitors. But I see you're still unconvinced, and I suppose you'll have your way. There's no one so obstinate as a girl in love."

Mrs. Dunbar turned away rather impatiently from the wayward niece, who had listened to her well-meant counsel with heightened colour and averted face.

But Stella was not going to let her good aunt go away cross. She burst out laughing at Mrs. Dunbar's last remark and going up to her laid one arm caressingly over her matronly shoulders. With a teasing look into her aunt's fair face she jestingly cried:

"I suppose you know that by your own experience, don't you, auntie dear? Oh! I've heard all about it. How they wanted you to marry a rich old bachelor and you wouldn't so much as look at him, but stole off one afternoon to the parish church and married uncle, and then walked home and introduced him as your husband as grand as you please. Ha! ha! that was cute enough. But you oughtn't to scold me for wanting my own way."

"That was a different matter, child," replied Mrs. Dunbar, somewhat mollified by this retrospect of her youthful days. "Your uncle was one of the steadiest and smartest young fellows in the town, and there was no earthly reason why my parents should have objected to him; but that palavering old Nehemiah Stimpson had nothing in his favour but the money that he had gouged out of other folks. My father and mother were glad enough that I didn't yield to them and marry him before many years passed. It came out that he'd been concerned in two or three disreputable affairs that happened about town, and then he was a deacon of the church. You think over what I've said, Stella. Ask the Lord to give you clearness of vision and a sound judgment. Remember that your whole future life depends upon the choice you make now."

Stella Forsyth was somewhat impressed by her aunt's reasoning. It caused her to seek the solitude of her chamber—the dear little nest which had been all her own during the ten rapidly-fleeting years that had transformed her from a careless child to a light-hearted maiden.

Here she had built many a castle in the air, indulged in many a sweet day-dream. And here, sobered for the nonce, she considered the merits and demerits of her two lovers, realising that, as her aunt had said, the crisis of her life had come.

Frank Reardon was undoubtedly a very proper young man and not bad looking, although he wasn't handsome like Jack. He was smart, and perhaps would win the success that her aunt predicted, but he wasn't any hand at all for fun. He took little part in the merry-makings of Heathervale, while Jack was continually inviting her to some amusement, and as constantly sending her books and flowers.

The books were nearly all novels, but Stella was ravenous for romantic tales, as most girls of eighteen, and never gave a thought to the wide field of literature as yet unexplored by her. She was sure she would be expected to lead a humdrum, old-fogy sort of life if she married Frank, with his narrow means and quiet, reserved demeanour; and she never could endure that. With Jack she would be as gay as she pleased—nothing suited him better than excitement—he was never still.

Frank had, in a few earnest words, told her that she was very dear to him, and asked her if she would be his wife, and she had taken time to consider. He couldn't care for her as Jack did, to woo her in that undemonstrative fashion, and no doubt her refusal wouldn't occasion any very poignant grief.

The upshot of it all was that Stella went down to the parlour that evening, where Jack Lindsay awaited her, with a blush on her cheek and a shy confusion in her eyes, and the pale moonlight that shed its mellow radiance over the town lying hushed in sleep, in "the wee, sma' hours" of that night, revealed a joyous, triumphant expression upon Jack Lindsay's face as he strode rapidly homeward from the Dunbar farmhouse.

The next day a tall, finely-proportioned young man, with a rather serious cast of countenance, lit up by a pair of splendid grey eyes that seemed not only keenly observant but capable of manifesting much kindness and fervour in their clear depths, knocked at the substantial front door and was admitted by Mrs. Dunbar, for Stella had flown upstairs at the sight of the manly figure.

It was Frank Reardon, and as he desired particularly to see Miss Forsyth the trembling girl was forced to descend and enter the room which had witnessed so different a scene only the night previous.

Stella was considerably frightened now that the case had come to hand, for she had, for all her deprecating comments on the young lawyer, an uneasy consciousness that there was something about him that she had not fathomed, and she felt dubious as to the coming tête-à-tête.

What passed within that somewhat old-fashioned parlour was not exactly known. Frank Reardon soon left the house with a look upon his countenance that would have convinced Stella had she seen it that the answer she had given him had not been received as lightly as she had deemed possible.

Mrs. Dunbar was disappointed in the course that Stella had adopted, and, out of her mature experience, felt many misgivings regarding the future happiness and prosperity of her pet niece, who was almost her only earthly solace since she had become a widow.

But well she knew the truth of the old saying that love will go where it is sent. Stella evidently cared little for Frank, and was fond of Jack; so she could only accept the situation with as good grace as possible and await the onward march of Time.

The report was soon current that Jack Lindsay and Stella Forsyth, the prettiest girl in town, were engaged. Some people wondered at Jack's choosing one whose dowry would necessarily be humble, but the majority thought that her good looks and bewitching ways offset his loftier social position.

Mrs. Lindsay and her stylish daughter, Annabel, were not over pleased with the choice of the son and brother who had been pampered from infancy, and was considered a very desirable parti.

They called upon Miss Forsyth, as in duty bound, and treated her to a sample of overwhelming condescension, behind which lurked an ill-disguised scorn that roused Stella to a very independent assumption of the dignities of her new position.

This was an unpalatable drop that she had not anticipated in the honeyed sweetness of the cup which had seemed her portion; and she felt she must resign herself to this thorn among the roses of her future pathway, for there could never be any affection between her and those cold-hearted votaries of fashion. Mr. Lindsay was too indolent to experience any signal feelings of either pleasure or dissatisfaction at the son's engagement, and contented himself with the mild remark that "if Jack was ever going to marry and settle down, it was time he was about it."

Six months passed; Jack was most devoted; the modest trousseau was prepared; and at length the wedding-day dawned, as fair and auspicious a June morning as ever smiled upon a trusting bride. The ceremony was to take place in the episcopal church, to which the Lindsays, more particularly the female portion of the family, paid assiduous devotion.

As Stella was not a member of any church, she was perfectly willing to accede to the desires of

her prospective mother-in-law, and be married by the good old rector; but her orthodox aunt was quite displeased with the slight that she considered it implied to her own minister, the pastor of the Baptist church.

After the wedding there was to be a reception, to which the élite of the community were invited. The farmers' sons and daughters, many of whom had been Stella's companions in days not long past, were highly indignant at this aristocratic exclusiveness; and Stella herself felt considerably chagrined over it, for, to do her justice, she was as warmly attached to these unpretentious young people as if they occupied stations of higher degree, however haughtily she might bear herself toward those whom she intuitively felt considered themselves vastly superior to her—a dependent orphan.

Notwithstanding the unpleasant airs of Mrs. Lindsay and Annabel, Stella was very happy as, attired for her bridal, she awaited the carriage which was to convey her and Mrs. Dunbar to the church.

She was very much in love with Jack—or thought she was—and life at his side looked bright and beautiful. When, a little later, the young couple knelt before the grey-haired rector, in the solemn ceremony that united them "for better, for worse," those present thought that a handsomer, likelier couple would be hard to find.

For once Jack had cast aside the mantle of gaiety which he habitually wore with easy nonchalance, and assumed an air of gravity befitting the momentous occasion. His dark eyes rested proudly and fondly on the blushing face of his bride, and the kiss that he pressed upon her lips as they were pronounced man and wife was fervent enough to convince the most sceptical spectator of the present depth of his affection. After the reception the newly-wedded pair departed on a trip to various places of interest, returning in two months, to Heathernvale, where they took up their abode with the Lindsays. Here we will leave them for a time.

Frank Reardon keenly felt his rejection by Stella Forsyth. Of a naturally quiet, thoughtful temperament, his likings and antipathies were both stronger than are usually experienced by natures more hasty in forming opinions. Beneath a calm exterior there burned an unquenchable fire of affection for the chosen few. The mother, who had denied herself all save the barest necessities of life in order to give her boy as good an education, in his youthful days, as her utmost exertions could compass, encouraging him on as he grew older, and, with a settled purpose, struggled along in the rugged pathway that led to the desired goal—this faithful, self-sacrificing mother was held in reverence unspeakable by the young lawyer, as he saw dimly outlined in the future the possibility of a successful career, largely due to the ennobling influence which she had from infancy cast around him.

For this mother nothing attainable was too good. She would ever be the object of every respectful attention that her grateful son could pay her. Those friends whom Frank recognised as kindred spirits, as friends in verity and not merely in name, found in him an ever-sympathetic and genial companion.

Their trusts were inviolable, their confidences sacred. Yet to the world at large he was not half the favourite that his successful rival, Jack Lindsay, was.

By many he was considered distant and cold, while Jack was "Hail, fellow, well met!" with everyone, casting a smile here, a laughing word there, but giving his serious attention to none.

Frank Reardon studied Stella Forsyth long before he acknowledged to himself that he loved her with all the manly passion of which he was capable.

A dangerous study she proved, weaving her seductive toils more closely about his heart with every coquettish glance, every movement of unconscious, womanly grace.

Frank saw that she was a little giddy, but he

looked deeper than that, and observed many manifestations of intrinsic worth behind the frivolity which she at times delighted to assume.

Though somewhat grave himself he would not have her otherwise than merry—it was one of her sweetest traits that she was ever buoyantly happy, a ringleader in mischief among the companions by whom she was universally beloved.

He believed her to be possessed of traits that would develop into his ideal of true and lovely womanliness, and, after a long season of doubts and fears, he imagined that he could extract from her bearing toward him some grounds for hope that his attachment had met with a response.

The time came when suspense could no longer be endured.

After a social gathering when Stella had been unusually gracious, Frank resolved to boldly end the matter, with the result which has been related.

Although striving to bear his disappointment as a brave man should, he found that he could not efface the beloved image from his heart. He could not bear to see Stella plight herself to another man, and one whom he knew was unstable and of mediocre stamp, consequently he did not attend the wedding.

He plunged with redoubled vigour into the intricacies of the law, devoting himself with such keen ardour to the profession that he soon became highly valued by his superiors in the firm, and early won an enviable reputation among the members of the bar.

In six years he rose to the second place in the firm, which was the most prominent one in the neighbouring city of Shelton, and was to all intents and purposes the leading member, his senior partner, who was long past the prime of life, now lending but the glory of his celebrated name to the business.

Frank Reardon, Esq., was a person of more importance in the social world than the struggling young lawyer of a few years previous. His features bore the refining impress of an intellectual life, and the success which had so early crowned his efforts to lead a career of usefulness among his fellow-beings had reduced that tendency to conceal the natural warmth of his disposition behind a screen of reserve which had debarrd many of his acquaintances from intimate association with him.

Now that it was no longer necessary to exercise the closest economy Frank not only indulged himself in many hitherto unattainable enjoyments, but delighted in giving his mother every possible pleasure.

Mrs. Reardon was still a fine-looking woman, and wherever she went in public she was received with marked respect, not only for the sake of her talented son but on account of her own superior intelligence and gracious, refined manners.

Fond mamma felt that their daughters might do worse than to marry Mr. Reardon, whose brilliant future was an assured thing, and the damsels themselves looked after his tall, striking figure in admiration, and coincided fully with the sage views of their parents, but none of them seemed to make any lasting impression.

Frank was courteous and gallant toward them all—none knew better than he how to be entertaining—but his heart was untaken.

The memory of his love for Stella was still sacred. No one, however bewitching, had filled the place left vacant by her, and Frank felt that in all probability no one would ever occupy it.

His mother desired that he should marry—strange as it may seem when it is considered that the mother and son were bound together by ties of more than ordinary strength.

Mrs. Reardon was not a selfish woman and she realised that Frank's life was incomplete without wife and children.

She longed to see him wedded to someone who would, appreciating his worth, supply all that was lacking to render him perfectly happy.

She was aware of his attachment to Stella—her loving sympathy had done much to bind up

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his wounds six years before. She had liked Stella in those days, and would have taken her affectionately to her heart as a daughter; but Stella was married to the man of her choice, and surely there were other equally lovable girls whom Frank could have for the asking.

One day Frank Reardon was standing upon the steps of the Grand Hotel conversing with a knot of lawyers who had, with himself, been invited to a grand dinner in honour of a distinguished judge from another city, who was in Shelton for a brief period.

A natty little phaeton drawn by a pair of spirited bays came swiftly down the street and drew up before the hotel.

Two young men sprang out, talking rather boisterously, and ascending the steps disappeared within the elegant bar-room.

Frank well knew both of them, though one was so sadly changed that he would hardly be recognised at a casual glance by a person who had not witnessed his gradual downfall. It was Jack Lindsay—gay, debonaire Jack, who a few years before was the pride and pet of three-fourths of the young ladies of Heathervale.

Traces of the beauty which once distinguished him were yet visible, but his countenance was disfigured by palpable marks of dissipation. His eyes were somewhat sunken and bloodshot, wandering with an unsteady gaze over surrounding objects. His nose was slightly tipped with red, his expression was reckless, and his personal appearance was becoming more and more neglected, a marked contrast to the fastidious nicety of former days.

His companion, Dick Hunter, was a notorious sporting man, who drove the fleetest horses and patronised the gayest saloons in Shelton, winning or losing, it was said, sometimes immense sums in a night.

Such was the company now sought by Stella's husband.

"Humph!" ejaculated Mr. Davis, one of the lawyers, "there they go again—a precious pair! They are almost inseparable of late, and it is said that Lindsay has one of the sweetest of wives. It is a shame for a man to make such a woman miserable, and she can't be anything else, for he neglects her altogether."

"Yes," remarked another, "he is often away for days together, fooling here in Shelton with none too exalted company, and his wife has a poor time of it with his mother and sister in Heathervale. They nag her dreadfully, though why they should nobody knows but themselves, for she is as far above them as the moon is above the earth. The poor thing has to put up with it, for she has nowhere else to go. She had one of the best of homes with her aunt before she married Jack; but Mrs. Dunbar died two years afterward, and as she left no will the property went to the nearest relative, a nephew of Mr. Dunbar's. Strange that people never will learn to attend to such things without waiting until death is fairly upon them. Of course the old lady meant for Jack's wife to have the little she left, bringing her up like an own daughter, and she never favoured the match, but always feared that the Lindsays would run through their property and the girl would be left in a hard position. Her surmises have turned out pretty nearly correct, too, I judge, from what I hear regarding their present circumstances."

"They are the same thing as ruined," said one of the men. "Matters were bad enough before the paper failures bade adieu to the world which he considered owed him nothing; but the women folks just made the money fly regardlessly, as soon as the season of mourning that fashion decrees was over, and Jack assisted them very materially with his expensive habits, that growing more unprincipled. I heard the other day that they were becoming badly involved. Jack hasn't done a stroke of work these six months, and never could settle down to anything. I'm sure I don't know what is to become of them, and I don't care, except for Jack's wife. I'm sorry to see her in such straits."

Frank Reardon's feelings were not of a pleasant nature as he listened to this conversation. He had observed the change for the worse in Jack and knew that he was not fulfilling the

part of a loyal and considerate husband, but he was not aware that the finances of the family were in such a bad state.

Poor little Stella! She could not be very happy, even with the chosen one of her heart. Long before this her eyes must have been opened to some extent, and she must have realised that Jack was not what she had in her girlish ignorance thought him to be.

What would she do if they were really on the eve of becoming penniless? She could not rely on Jack for the protection and support which it was his duty to provide her, and she had never been kindly treated by his mother and sister.

It was a sorry situation; and Frank heaved a long sigh as he thought how different things might have been if he had been the husband of Stella. How he would have worked for her! How he would have striven to make her life one of unalloyed happiness! How kind and motherly his own gentle parent would have been!

The entrancing vision was too much for his own peace of mind, and he hastily entered into conversation on another subject, hoping that his abstraction had not been observed. But it had not escaped the Argus eye of one or two of his friends, and they referred to it after the dinner was over.

"Did you notice how interested Reardon was when we were talking about the Lindsays?" queried one. "He tried to appear unconcerned, but he was considerably affected. Didn't I hear once that he was smitten with Stella Lindsay when she was a girl? Maybe that's why he is still single."

"I know well enough that it is. He has never got over that affair. I must say the girl showed poor judgment in selecting Lindsay—for Reardon went so far as to offer himself—but Jack was a good-natured, handsome fellow then, and I suppose she thought she'd have plenty of money if she married him. Can't tell always how people are going to turn out, but it seems as though anyone with half an eye could have seen years ago that Frank Reardon had the making of a smart man in him. There go Lindsay and Hunter now and Jack is about as drunk as a man can be and hold himself up. By Jove! he can hardly do that! He gave a lurch then and Hunter is supporting him. That Hunter's a devil! He pretends great friendship for those who are idiotic enough to follow in his wake, and yet he'd rob them of their last penny without the least compunction. He is largely instrumental in Lindsay's ruin."

It was true. Jack Lindsay, from an overweening love for social pleasures, a constant craving for excitement, had allowed himself to drift farther and farther away from all that was pure and innocent in the gratification of his desires.

Held in check for a time by his affection for his wife, which was as sincere as he was capable of feeling, but was, like all his emotions, of a transient nature, he finally became restless and branched out in hitherto untried paths, none of them leading to anything beneficial.

As his wife's influence became less potent he grew more unreasonable and irritable, and resented any interference in the course he had elected to pursue.

He fell in with Dick Hunter—a most unfortunate occurrence—who recognised his power over the giddy-headed fellow and set himself straightway to work to use it in the best manner calculated to advance his own interests.

Guided by Hunter Lindsay became an habitual of places which once he would have scorned to enter, and his inherent love of gambling was skilfully worked upon until it had assumed gigantic proportions and he owed Hunter an astounding sum, "won in fair and honourable play."

Six years had made but little change in the thriving town of Heathervale. Comfortable, substantial houses stood as of yore in the midst of well-kept flower-gardens or smoothly-trimmed lawns, broad and fertile fields stretching far to the rear of those in the outskirts of the village.

On an eminence a little to one side of the main street was situated the Lindsay mansion,

which was one of the most pretentious residences in Heathervale.

Here a close observer would detect some alterations. The grounds no longer bore the impress of careful cultivation, such as was given them by the faithful gardener who for years made it an object to keep the shrubberies, the flowers and the velvet sward, in unsurpassed condition.

It had been found necessary to dispense with his services, and an air of neglect was creeping over the place. The interior of the house gave evidence also of the decaying fortunes of the family.

The elegant furniture and carpets were becoming perceptibly worn. Where four servants were formerly employed two only were now retained, and they were waxing impatient for the wages which had long been due them.

Time had left more traces of its handiwork on Miss Annabel than on her stately mother. Mrs. Lindsay, the elder, looked a shade more haughty and repellent, and a few grey hairs streaked her still abundant and faultlessly arranged locks, otherwise her appearance was materially the same as six or eight years previous.

But Annabel, who was older than Jack, was fast becoming passé. At twenty-nine—she acknowledged to twenty-five—she had been comely, though requiring the aid of an elaborate toilet and a judicious use of cosmetics to enable her to keep her place in the ranks of young and marketable ladies.

Like many another exacting and exclusive society belle who had turned a deaf ear to the suitors of younger days, anticipating still more eligible offers in future, she suddenly found herself confined to the list of confirmed old maids, no longer an object of attraction to the opposite sex.

As she was not troubled with superabundant affections and had never lost the semblance of a heart which she possessed her celibacy occasioned no further regret than arose from the fact that as Miss Lindsay her income was extremely limited and bade fair to cease altogether, while as the wife of some wealthy man she might now be surrounded by luxury, occupying the high position in society that her ambitious nature craved.

This mortifying circumstance had an injurious effect on Miss Annabel's never very placid temper, and she did not form an agreeable companion for either her mother, who would readily be taken for her sister, or her young sister-in-law, whom she cordially hated for the attractiveness which presented so great a contrast to her sharp lineaments at thirty-five years of age.

Stella Lindsay was no longer a care-free, sunny-faced girl. Though wearing her twenty-four years lightly the trials and disappointments of her married life had brought an expression of patience and resignation not seen on the faces of those who have not been subjected to the chastening influences of sorrow.

For a few halcyon months her happiness was marred only by the vexations emanating from her residence in the same house with two antagonistic women.

She had entered on her new duties with the determination to do all that lay in her power to create good feeling towards herself on the part of her husband's relatives, and failing in that she had striven to bear as quietly as consistent with proper womanly dignity the slights put upon her.

While she had Jack's ardent devotion to soothe her wounded feelings she got along better than she would once have deemed creditable that one of her high spirit could do under such trying circumstances.

True she often felt indignant and hurt at Jack's toleration of their treatment of her, but she made excuses for him after the first heat was over, soliloquising that after all they were his own mother and sister, and his eyes were blinded to many of their faults and foibles, while the worst of their insults were offered in his absence.

Poor Stella! She little thought that her trials were but just begun.



["I SUPPOSE YOU KNOW THAT BY YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE, DON'T YOU, AUNTIE?"]

It was not long before she observed a decadence in his lover-like deportment, and he absented himself more and more from her society. It was very pleasant to participate in all the gaieties of the season with her husband at her side, but not so agreeable to have him often away and get no account of his whereabouts or occupation on his return.

At first she used to playfully question him on such occasions, but his evident aversion to any attempt at espionage of his movements soon revealed to her a phase of his character that she was unacquainted with.

She tried to bear her lot with equanimity as little by little the weakness of his nature and principles was borne in upon her mind; but there were times when her impulsive temper and sensitive feelings gained the mastery and reproaches ended in recriminations.

This was oftener the case probably because Stella had come to realise that her affection for Jack was not the all-absorbing passion which a woman should give the man for whom she forsakes home and kindred.

Had he proved worthy of her love doubtless the girlish fancy she entertained for him at the time of her marriage would have developed into an emotion such as she was capable of experiencing toward her husband, but to one of her high sense of honour and strict ideas of rectitude nothing was more calculated to inspire contempt than the knowledge that the man who should be her sole reliance was a gambler and a spendthrift, becoming badly addicted to the use of intoxicating liquors and frequently in the company of women who were shut out from respectability.

Long ago she had realised the truth of her aunt's words on that memorable day when she had rejected Frank Reardon and accepted Jack Lindsay.

It was plain enough now who was the nobler man. But Stella was not one to sit down and bewail her unhappy lot. She was loyal to her husband, remembering the solemn vows she had

uttered at the altar, and allowed no vain regrets for Frank Reardon to fill her heart, even after her affection for Jack had been crushed almost entirely out of existence.

She disciplined herself to a better command of her naturally quick temper and resigned herself to the inevitable with a gentle patience which was the outgrowth of the refining fires of anguish and bitter disappointment which had raged within her.

The public were justified in the assertion that Lindsay had "one of the sweetest of wives." Those dormant qualities which the young lawyer had discerned beneath her girlish flightiness had sprung actively into being, though under a different regime than Reardon had anticipated when he hoped to win her for himself.

Mrs. Dunbar's death was a great shock to Stella, occurring suddenly and depriving her of the only relative whom she knew and loved, one who had been almost a mother to the orphan. But as Jack grew more indifferent and profligate she rejoiced that her aunt was not living to be pained by the verification of her fears of her niece's happiness.

Sometimes she thought she could bear it better if the Creator of all things had granted her a child, but that blessing was denied her. No doubt it was best so; the offspring of so reckless a father might bring shame and sorrow to her heart ere his life's race was run.

Thus matters stood when one day, a few weeks after the incident mentioned at the Grand Hotel, Jack Lindsay made his preparations to again visit Shelton. He had remained at home a week after a prolonged stay in the city, returning in the most debauched state that Stella had ever witnessed, and his singular conduct since had made her very uneasy.

He seemed burdened with some secret trouble which haunted him continually. His restless actions all day and his fevered dreams at night testified to the disquietude of his mind; but he repelled all Stella's entreaties for his confidence, turning the subject with a laugh that grated on her ear every time she referred to it.

"Do not leave me," implored Stella; for Jack had been unusually kind the past few days, exhibiting more affection than for a long time previous, until she thought with a faint throb of hope that his love was not quite dead after all, and it might be with this to build upon she could yet turn him from his evil course.

She dreaded the effect of a visit to Shelton and the consequent pernicious influence of Dick Hunter and others of his type. More than ever in her life before she shrank from the parting. A presentiment of coming evil cast its shadow over her and she could not shake it off.

But her entreaties were of no avail—Jack was bent upon going, but before he vaulted into his saddle he took his wife into his arms in the old loving way and kissed her tenderly on brow and lip.

"I know I have not been a good husband to you, Stella," he said. "Forgive me, dear, I will try to do better in future."

Stella's heart gave a great leap for joy as she heard these unexpected words, and returned Jack's embrace with unwonted fervour. Could it be possible that brighter days were in store?

How quickly her affectionate nature responded to her husband's softened and repentant mood, though revealed to her only a moment! Surely the old love might blossom forth again and their lives become in truth re-united if only he would keep his resolve to amend his ways.

As she turned to ascend the piazza steps while Jack galloped down the street she saw his mother and sister at the window, their sneering looks showing that they had witnessed the lover-like parting; but Stella cared little for that. She alone knew how unjust had been their comments on Jack's downward career.

"The inevitable result of a mésalliance," they scornfully asserted, with much more in the same vein.

It had once been hard to bear, but Stella had risen above their unworthy taunts and passed them by in silent contempt.

(To be Continued.)





["PARDON ME, MADAM, YOU MISAPPREHEND ME. I SHOULD HAVE SAID YOUR STEP-DAUGHTER, MISS MAGGIE."]

## SYDNEY RAYMOND'S STRATAGEM.

A NOVELETTE.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

### CHAPTER I.

In a dark, musty little office on the ground floor of one of the dingiest of the dirt-begrimed houses which form a certain ill-favoured square at the back of High Holborn, Mr. Jonas Spindleweb, attorney, sat one morning busily writing.

He was a little, dried-up old man of uncertain antiquity, with a sallow, deeply-lined face, remarkably bird-like in expression, and a head absolutely free from the smallest suspicion of hair.

His habiliments were very rusty and much worn, and consisted of an old-fashioned swallow-tail coat, a variegated satin waistcoat, a pair of inexpressibles exceedingly short in the legs and displaying an abnormal amount of his well-worn Wellington boots, a dirty collar, and a rusty black stock.

"Bless me, what a melancholy morning!" he exclaimed, in squeaky, precise tones, remarkably resembling a parrot's, gently laying down his scratchy quill and gazing out of the dirty window.

Apart from the dismal weather the spectacle that met his gaze was not of a very enlivening character.

In the centre of the square was a large plot of ground which looked more like a pauper's burial ground than a garden—so desolate and neglected was it. The few crippled trees, cracked and smoke-dried, which languished within it were making a gloomy effort to clothe their naked limbs by putting forth a little foliage, and the

solitary sparrow or two, town bred, and evidently asthmatic, which were languidly hopping from bough to bough mustered up sufficient energy to croak forth a chirrup now and again in a manner which was lugubriously pathetic.

Mr. Spindleweb was a dry, tough old limb of the law, and not much given to tender feeling; but as his eye wandered across the dreary waste of rank vegetation he thought what a little Paradise it could be made to the pale-faced, sickly little inhabitants of the close, malarious courts and alleys in which the neighbourhood abounded.

"Ah! who have we here?" he exclaimed, as a cab dashed up the square and stopped at his door. "A fine man—truly a handsome man. Military gent, shouldn't wonder—evidently been abroad."

"Bless me! who can he be?" he said, as the subject of his speculations rang the office bell, and by a series of bird-like hops proceeding to the door and opening it.

"Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Spin—dleweb," inquired the visitor, glancing down and examining the little attorney with a smile of amusement.

"Yes, sir, I am he," returned the latter, returning the scrutiny in a very bird-like manner, and inwardly endorsing his former observations as to the other's comeliness.

A greater contrast than they presented as they stood face to face could not be imagined.

The attorney was a mere shrivelled-up, antiquated miniature of a man, while the other embodied the opposite extreme. He was apparently somewhere near five-and-thirty. His form was singularly tall, exquisitely proportioned and indicative of manly vigour and great muscular power. He had a fine, massive face which bore the evidence of recent exposure to sun and wind, and which, if not strikingly handsome, was wondrously attractive and prepossessing, regular, deep-cut features, a pair of jet-black eyes, clear, piercing and sparkling with the light of intelligence, integrity and dauntless courage, and a firm-set mouth, adorned by a heavy, dark moustache and betokening steadfastness

and stability of character. Take him inch by inch he was as fine and perfect a specimen of vigorous manhood as one could wish to see.

"Do you wish to consult with me?" inquired Mr. Spindleweb.

"Yes; or, rather, I should feel obliged if you could spare me a moment or two of your valuable time."

"Humph! ah! very polite. Some favour to plead," was the lawyer's mental verdict.

He was an old man of great astuteness and keenness of perception, and he saw that his visitor was agitated by some powerful excitement which he was sedulously striving to subdue and conceal.

"With the greatest of pleasure. Pray step in," he said, aloud, closing the door and leading the way down a dark, dirty passage into his sanctum—a dark, dusty, small room, smelling strongly of mouldy papers, with a ceiling and walls coated with the dirt of ages, a couple of rickety old chairs and an inkstained desk laden with a profusion of legal documents.

"Pray be seated, sir," begged the attorney, placing one of the chairs and seating himself in the other at the desk.

The visitor bowed, but instead of complying produced a newspaper from his pocket.

"My visit to you is in reference to this advertisement," he said, laying the paper on the desk with his finger upon the item in question, which was to the effect that if Sydney Raymond, son of Reuben and Sophia Raymond, deceased, etc., would communicate with Jonas Spindleweb, he would hear of something greatly to his advantage.

Mr. Spindleweb glanced at the paper and then scrutinised his visitor's face as if to read that also, but it baffled and perplexed him.

"Now, who is he? Can't be the one surely? Now what's he driving at?" he asked himself.

"I presume you are the gentleman referred to as being able to furnish particulars," observed the visitor, his calmness evidently costing him no small effort.

"To be sure—to interested parties," was the guarded rejoinder.

"Will you have the goodness then to do so?"

"May I inquire what prompts you to ask this of me?"

"I have good reasons, I assure you."

"From which I infer that you are in some way an interested party?" returned the circumspect attorney, interrogatively.

The visitor bit his lips and deliberated a moment.

He saw the kind of man he had to deal with and knew that trying to elicit information from him without first disclosing his reasons for so doing was as futile as committing the proverbial absurdity and attempting to extract blood from a stone. So he wisely determined to alter his tactics and abandon all concealment.

"Yes, I am a very materially interested party," he said, "for to the best of my belief I am the Sydney Raymond to whom the advertisement refers."

"Indeed! Allow me to congratulate you, my dear sir," cried the attorney, with some incredulity, which however he deemed it politic to conceal, bobbing up and warmly shaking the visitor's hand. "You are a very fortunate man—an exceedingly fortunate man."

"Then it would greatly conduce to my happiness and peace of mind if you would as speedily as possible advise me as to the nature of my good fortune," returned the visitor, with some irritation and impatience.

"With the greatest pleasure, my dear sir. Believe me, I don't for a moment doubt your veracity, but I'm sure you will see the necessity of my being satisfied as to your identity before doing so."

"Quite so. If you will kindly examine these documents I think they will go a long way towards satisfying you on that point, and I am quite willing and ready to answer any questions you think proper to put to me."

The documents underwent a searching scrutiny at the hands of the cautious lawyer. They were of a peculiarly convincing nature and dispersed all doubt from his mind.

But to make assurance doubly sure he with profuse apologies plied the visitor with many subtle interrogations which manifested that he had previously made himself cognisant of many details relating to Sydney Raymond's history.

The visitor answered them without hesitation or reserve and in a highly satisfactory manner.

"I am extremely obliged to you, my dear sir, for bearing with me so patiently and submitting to the somewhat rigorous examination I have felt it my duty to make you undergo," said Mr. Spindleweb. "You have proved your identity in a manner which, to my mind, leaves not the smallest ground for doubt."

"Then you are satisfied that I am the Sydney Raymond?"

"Perfectly satisfied. But there is one point which somewhat puzzles me, and that is why you have not applied to me before this. The advertisement appeared for the first time some three months ago and has been repeated several times since."

"That is easily explained. As I should have told you, for the last two years I have been in Australia. I only arrived in London last evening and saw this advertisement for the first time. I discovered it quite fortuitously while glancing through an old newspaper which I found lying about my room at the hotel, and which I have shown you. So you perceive I have not lost much time in presenting myself. Now are you satisfied?"

"Yes, on every point, and it is my extremely pleasant duty to heartily congratulate and inform you that you are a most fortunate man."

"Yes, yes; I am much obliged for your congratulations," returned Mr. Raymond, losing all patience with the deliberate, prolix old man. "But pray terminate my suspense by being a little more expeditious and explicit."

"Very well, sir," returned the attorney,

without altering his slow, methodical tone. "Doubtless you remember your uncle, Mr. Daniel Grip?"

"I have cogent reasons for doing so as long as I live!" was the acrimonious rejoinder. "But what of him?"

"It is my melancholy duty to inform you that he paid the debt of nature and expired some few months ago. In short, he is dead, and I trust at rest."

Mr. Raymond gave a great start, gazed at the lawyer intently, but remained silent, waiting for him to resume with ill-concealed eagerness and impatience.

"Yes, Mr. Grip is dead!" continued the attorney, with unalloyed slowness and prolixity, as though he were taking a malicious delight in torturing his visitor. "An acute, business-like thorough man of the world was he—"

"You need not define his character. I'm but too well acquainted with it," cried Mr. Raymond, with bitterness and scorn.

"You speak bitterly, sir."

"I do, and Heaven knows I have good cause for doing so."

"If he at any time wronged or injured you, I venture to say he has now made ample recompense."

"How, pray?"

"By bequeathing to you the results of his life of money-getting, which means something near fifty thousand pounds."

"Fifty thousand pounds!" exclaimed Mr. Raymond, dumfounded and bewildered, as well he might be.

"Yes, fifty thousand pounds—on one condition."

"And that is?"

"Of a somewhat remarkable nature. To wit—your marrying a certain lady."

Mr. Raymond started violently, bit his lip, and a fierce, scornful light flashed in his black eyes.

"Who is this lady?" he inquired, in a low, abrupt tone.

"Fortunately, I can answer you fully, my dear sir, for I have made it my duty to become conversant with much concerning her. She is young—barely twenty—considered pretty, and modest, and as far as I can ascertain is altogether a very commendable, engaging young lady. She is the daughter of a certain gentleman, once rich, but now greatly reduced in circumstances, who, through serious reverses was compelled to apply to your uncle for assistance, and—and—in short, did business with him."

"Ah! I comprehend," muttered Mr. Raymond to himself, with great bitterness. "One of the victims of his grasping cupidity and merciless usury; and to ease his conscience, if he had one, the old money-grubber wants to make amends in this shuffling, underhand way. It's well worthy of him."

"And suppose I were to refuse to comply with this one condition?" he asked, suddenly.

"In the event of your doing so I regret to say you would forfeit your inheritance, which, provided she be willing to conform to this one condition, would go wholly and solely to the young lady, and vice versa," returned the attorney, with an incredulous smile at the absurdity of such a hypothesis.

"Then I do refuse," cried Mr. Raymond, with obdurate determination.

"Bless me! You jest, sir?" exclaimed Mr. Spindleweb, with greater incredulity, yet perplexed, for the expression in his face was indicative of quite the opposite to pleasantry.

"I do not, sir; I am in earnest."

"But—but surely—"

"Mark you, Mr. Spindleweb," said Mr. Raymond, impressively. "Fourteen years I have toiled hard and assiduously, and my efforts have been rewarded with fair success. I'm by no means a rich man, but I have been used to roughing it, and my wants are small and easily gratified. I am far from being a paragon of virtue, but I can go through the world holding my head up and looking everyone in the face, for I have acted, or, at least, have sedulously striven to act like a man and wrong no one. I

have won independence, which with self-esteem is dearer to me than life itself. Do you think that I will lose them both by becoming the meanest object on God's earth for the sake of gaining a money-grubber's hoard? No, a thousand times no! I should loathe and detest myself."

"Come, come, compose yourself, my dear sir. You are hasty. Pray consider," said the lawyer, greatly moved and filled with secret admiration by his words.

"I have considered, or, at least, as much as it is necessary for me to do so. I would sooner break stones in the street than buy affluence at such a cost."

"Take time, my dear sir. Be advised by an old man, take time to consider it. Such opportunities do not occur every day. The lady is young and pretty, you are—well, at least, attractive and a bachelor. See her and judge of her character for yourself, and who knows what may happen—who knows? Strange things happen every day. No one knows of this matter but you and I. Be advised, let it stand in abeyance for, say, a month."

"Where's the good of such a proceeding?" asked Mr. Raymond, in perplexity.

"Why, my dear sir—God bless me! what a singular coincidence!" exclaimed Mr. Spindleweb, as a thought suddenly occurred to him, hopping back to his desk and picking up that morning's "Times."

"Read that," he cried triumphantly, pointing out a certain advertisement.

Mr. Raymond eagerly did so, and the attorney remarked that he was wavering and determined to take advantage of his indecision.

"The very thing, is it not?" he cried. "You can see her as she really is, become intimately acquainted with her, learn her true character, and so on. Why, bless me! what could be better?"

"So be it then," cried Mr. Raymond, with sudden determination, flinging the paper aside and grasping the old man's hand. "Why, what a jolly old boy you are."

"You're exceedingly kind. It is agreed then?"

"Yes. Come and dine with me to-night at my hotel, and we will talk the matter over."

"With all my heart."

"At six sharp, to-night, and good bye till then."

"Good bye, my dear sir."

And they warmly shook hands and parted.

"An odd affair this," soliloquised Mr. Raymond, with an amused smile. "I wonder where the deuce it will end? Heaven knows, I don't!"

"A fine, handsome fellow, a man every inch of him, both morally and physically," muttered the old lawyer, as he hopped back to his musty office. "An, my little rosebud, you little think what is in store for you. It must come to pass, stranger things do happen every day."

"Strange! men call me 'hard-hearted' and a sordid money-grubber," he went on, in deep cogitation. "Perhaps I am, for I've never loved. Yet though I have only seen and watched her and never exchanged a word with her, this fresh, lovely girl seems to have kindled something like tenderness and love within me. No, I've never loved anything but gold, but I'd give half of it freely to have such a one to love and care for and love and care for me in return. Rich! but wifeless, childless, and old. A mistake—all a mistake."

## CHAPTER II.

"WHAT, Maggie, my dear! What brings you here?" exclaimed Mr. Timberley, as, wending his weary way home from the City one evening, he found himself face to face with his daughter.

No wonder his gloomy countenance lighted up as his eye rested upon her, she looked charming enough to take captive the obdurate heart of Diogenes himself.

She had a perfectly oval face, characterized



by a beautiful expression of patience, gentleness, and sweetness; her cheeks were rosy, dimpled, and downy, like a ripe peach; her eyes large, tender, and of the deepest blue, shaded by long lashes; her nose, rather short but perfectly proportioned, gave to her face a look which was quite irresistible; her mouth was small, with rosy lips and little white teeth; and her hair, sunny chestnut, peeped out of the front of a bewitching little bonnet and fell in massive curls upon her shoulders.

Her garments, though shabby and far from elegant, were scrupulously neat and tidy, and the form they covered was supple, well-rounded, and perfectly modelled, though somewhat diminutive.

"What brings me here? Why, to meet you, to be sure, you stupid old dear," she cried, in answer to her father's interrogation, slipping a little ungloved hand through his arm and giving it an affectionate squeeze. "So that we could walk home together and have a cosy little chat."

"Gracious! how dull and dejected we are!" she cried, gazing sorrowfully at his careworn, gloomy face.

"Ah, Maggie, my dear, I've much to make me so," he moodily returned, with a deep-drawn sigh. "It's a hard, bitter struggle, and struggle as I will to keep our heads above water we are sinking lower and lower and getting deeper and deeper immersed in debt. I'm harassed and worried almost out of my senses. A hard lot mine, Maggie—a hard lot!"

A hard lot indeed, poor fellow! He was barely fifty, yet care had deeply lined his face and whitened his hair. Four or five years since he was a happy, prosperous man, but misfortunes came upon him heavy and fast.

With the hope of saving himself from ruin, his first wife—Maggie's mother—being dead, he married a widow reputed to be possessed of considerable wealth. When too late he discovered that this was false, and that she had basely deceived him.

Instead of acquiring means to consolidate his tottering fortune by his marriage, all he had gained was a sordid, scheming, almost portionless woman, who had married him solely for his wealth and position.

She, in her turn, was terribly disappointed, for hopeless bankruptcy and ruin soon came upon him, and from a position of splendour and affluence they fell into respectable indigence.

Then she revealed herself in her true colours; instead of sympathising with and consoling him in his dire distress she heaped bitter reproaches upon him, and instead of a helpmate and compassionate companion in adversity she became an implacable, arbitrary tyrant, and drove him to despair by her selfish extravagance.

Manifold adversities broke his once haughty spirit and pride, and she ruled him with autocratic sway, and made him passively submit and fear her.

Maggie was the one solitary light and comfort of the poor, worried, distracted man's life, and her lot was made equally as hard as his own.

Her own mother had been all that a mother could be, and in her the warm-hearted girl had found a loving companion and wise counselor, who reciprocated her ardent affection, understood and participated in the impulses of her young heart, and ever treated her with the gentleness and kindness of true maternal love.

In her step-mother she found a harsh, inexorable persecutor, and from her received nothing but slight, insults, and systematic unkindness.

She was not wanting in womanly spirit, and what it cost her to subdue it no one knew but herself. But her love and sympathy for her father gave her the requisite strength and fortitude, and, outwardly, at least, she meekly submitted and played the role of Cinderella to the heartless step-mother and her haughty, petulant daughter.

Yes, Maggie was a second Cinderella. They mercilessly snubbed and slighted her; made her

their drudge, and vented upon her their spite, disappointment, and rage.

But much as they tried to crush and break her spirit they failed dismally, for she maintained an indomitable cheerfulness, and was always gentle, patient, and uncomplaining.

"A hard lot mine—a terribly hard lot," repeated Mr. Timberley, with another sigh.

Maggie echoed his sigh, and all the brightness and vivacity faded from her face, leaving nothing but tender compassion and sympathy.

"Father, I know I'm only a helpless, insignificant little thing," she said, looking very earnestly into his face, "but surely there is something in which I can assist you."

"How, my dear?"

"Why, by earning a subsistence for myself. That would make one the less to provide for. Don't you think I might procure a situation—as a governess, say?"

"No, my dear, I don't," was his decided reply.

"Why not?" she asked, with some disappointment.

"Why, because—they—they could not spare you at home," he stammered, in a flurry at the bare thought of being parted from her. "You are a very kind, thoughtful girl to propose such a thing, but—but it's not to be thought of for a moment."

"Is there anything else, then?" she asked, eagerly.

"No, my dear, nothing that I can see. The case seems hopeless, for my wife doesn't seem to—understand," he faltered.

"No, she and Lydia don't and won't understand adapting themselves to circumstances," she cried, her cheeks flushing and eyes flashing with indignation and anger. "It's a cruel shame! They haven't the smallest sympathy or consideration. They're both so miserably selfish. Their thoughtless extravagance is enough to ruin and discourage anyone."

"You—you misjudge them, I fear, my dear," he nervously replied, though he felt her words were incontrovertibly true.

Maggie gave her head an emphatic little shake, but did not reply, and they proceeded some distance in gloomy silence.

"I have it," she suddenly exclaimed, with some excitement.

"Got what, my dear?" inquired Mr. Timberley, lugubriously, starting out of a reverie of hopeless despair.

"Why can't we take a boarder?" she asked, eagerly. "We can without inconvenience spare two rooms at least."

"We could very well, but I'm afraid my wife won't consent."

"I don't care; she can but refuse. I shall put it to her," declared Maggie, determinately.

An hour later they had arrived home and joined the mother and daughter in the little drawing-room.

Mrs. Timberley was a handsome, buxom, stately woman of about five-and-forty; her daughter was a tall, elegant young lady of three-and-twenty, with a face which would have been downright beautiful had it not been for the supercilious, cold, inanimate expression it wore and displayed her true character so veraciously.

They were both arrayed in garments of much elegance and of the latest fashion, which contrasted remarkably with the shabby, homely habiliments of Maggie and her father; both minced and spoke with a fashionable drawl, assumed extreme languor and ennui, and acted with ludicrous affectation.

"What a miserable fate it is to be so wretchedly poverty-stricken!" sighed Mrs. Timberley, in a petulant, querulous tone, lounging languidly back among the cushions of an easy chair. "I declare one had better be dead and in their grave than live our life."

"Life, mamma?" drawled Lydia, in languid surprise from the sofa, raising her eyes from the latest fashionable novel which she was perusing.

"Surely you don't call this living! I call it merely existing."

"Ah! my poor child! well may you say so,"

was the mother's reply, resting her stern eye upon her husband, who immediately became exceedingly discomposed and uneasy, for he knew too well what was coming—a tirade of bitter lamentations and harsh, unjust reproaches and accusations.

Maggie, however, seeing her opportunity, came to his rescue and saved him.

"I've been thinking, mamma," she began, with great hesitation and diffidence and deeply colouring under the pitying, contemptuous gaze with which they instantly regarded her.

"Well, child—what?" inquired Mrs. Timberley, with asperity.

"I've been thinking that we might help matters considerably by—by taking a boarder," she said, in a desperate burst.

The mother and daughter exchanged glances and seemed to come to a mutual understanding.

"You ridiculous child!" exclaimed the former, with a smile of lofty amusement, but in a tone that gave Maggie great hopes. "What an absurd proposal to make! Hasn't our poor miserable servant enough to do already?"

"Yes, mamma; but if you will permit me I will take all responsibility and do the additional work," replied Maggie, in an anxious, pleading tone.

"On that condition then—well, I'll think over it," was the reply, as if she were making a most magnanimous concession and bestowing an inestimable favour, after another exchange of glances with Lydia, and Maggie was transported with joy.

The mother and daughter held a consultation on the matter. They were both the incarnation of selfishness, and as they were fully aware that they would reap the pecuniary benefit accruing from this new source without in any way helping to earn it, it met with their approval, and the result was the insertion forthwith of an advertisement in the newspaper, offering the height of domestic comfort and felicity to a single gentleman of undeniably respectable.

Maggie waited anxiously for the result. She was not kept long in suspense, for an applicant presented himself the same evening and was received by Mrs. Timberley.

What passed between them Maggie didn't know. But when the interview was ended and the applicant gone Mrs. Timberley announced that he was accepted and as a special favour was to take up his abode with them next day; and Maggie heard her confidentially declare to her daughter, with many significant glances, that he was very handsome, a perfect gentleman in every respect, and, with great emphasis, a bachelor, apparently well-to-do, and very liberal, and altogether a singularly charming and desirable individual, and one, she imagined, they could make an associate of without lowering themselves.

The subsequent evening the boarder appeared. Mrs. Timberley accorded him a most flattering and gracious welcome, begging him to waive all formality and hinting that she hoped they might soon grow to consider him not as a mere boarder but as a friend and companion.

He politely thanked her and echoed her sentiments, telling her that he was recently returned after a long absence abroad and was without friends or acquaintances of any description, and that he would deem it a great kindness if they would suffer him to enjoy their society and companionship when he felt disposed.

Mrs. Timberley, all smiles and satisfaction, hoped he would do so, with the firm assurance that he was far from intruding and was always heartily welcome, and presently ushered him into the drawing-room, where Lydia was seated, anxiously awaiting his coming.

"My daughter, sir; Lydia, my dear, Mr. Moudray."

Lydia languidly rose and acknowledged him with a stately bow and inwardly endorsed her mother's opinion as to his good looks.

Mr. Moudray gazed at her with strange eagerness, and an ill-disguised cloud of disappointment stole over his face as he bowed and murmured some polite salutation. He accepted the chair Mrs. Timberley proffered him and used his

utmost endeavours to amuse and entertain them.

Presently Maggie entered, unconscious of the stranger's presence, for she was only just returned from some domestic errand. She stopped short, cast down her eyes and deeply coloured, for Mr. Moudray's keen black eyes were fixed upon her face in surprise and undisguised admiration.

The vigilant mother and daughter glanced at each other apprehensively, and at Maggie spitefully.

"Oh, you ridiculous child!" cried Mrs. Timberley, with queenly compassion, taking her arm and giving it a truculently playful pinch.

"This is my step-daughter Maggie," she said, leading her towards Mr. Moudray, who started quickly to his feet and with a pleasant smile took the little hand she timidly extended and greeted her warmly.

She essayed to reply, and raised her eyes to his handsome face, but cast them down again in pretty confusion, for he was still regarding her tenderly and admiringly.

"You must really pardon the poor child's awkwardness and want of polish," cried Mrs. Timberley, striving to hide her spite and annoyance by a smile of generous compassion. "She's an odd girl, and all the care and pains my daughter and I have bestowed upon her seem utterly thrown away."

The hot, indignant blood dyed Maggie's face and neck, and she raised her soft, eloquent eyes, now glistening with tears, to his face in mute deprecation.

The glance he returned told her she was understood, for it was full of meaning, kindness and sympathy, and made her wounded heart throb with new and strange emotions and her cheeks flush again.

He did not trust himself to speak, but the look that was in his face told Mrs. Timberley that her words had had the opposite effect to what she intended, and filled her and Lydia with uneasiness and anger.

He pressed Maggie's hand and released it, and re-seating himself resumed the conversation her advent had interrupted.

Later on came Mr. Timberley, and the group was complete. He withdrew meekly into a corner, after going through the ceremony of introduction, but Mr. Moudray soon inveigled him into conversation and made the poor, troubled creature forget his many cares and brighten up amazingly.

Mr. Moudray had evidently travelled extensively and learned much by keen observation. He was an excellent conversationalist, and charmed them with his entertaining talk, seasoned by many a diverting anecdote. Added to his handsome person and polished behaviour there was something singularly fascinating about him, and apparently without any effort he charmed them completely and made them feel as if they had known him for years instead of two or three hours.

When he withdrew for the night Lydia, who had put forth all her powers to please and captivate, had a private confabulation with her devoted mother.

We will not recapitulate what passed between them, but let it suffice if we say that Mr. Moudray was the subject discussed, and that she retired to rest that night flushed with excitement, dazzled by wild hopes, agitated by sensations she had never experienced before, and with a busily-scheming brain.

That evening was like a dream to Maggie. She took no part in the conversation, but sat knitting alone and neglected at a distant part of the room, a silent but delighted listener, drinking in the sweet tones of that musical voice, which made her heart flutter strangely.

Now and again she peeped shyly at its owner's face, but, strange to say, only to find his kind, thoughtful eyes surreptitiously regarding her.

Half through the night she lay awake, dreaming over the trivial events of the evening, calling to mind every glance of those beautiful eyes, every word he uttered—the musical voice and perfect face haunted her.

In a very short time Mrs. Timberley's hope was gratified; Mr. Moudray was the constant companion of herself and daughter, and they looked upon him as one of the family. They did not take the trouble to conceal their great satisfaction, or how completely he had won their esteem and good favour. On the contrary, they openly courted his society and companionship and were indefatigable in their efforts to please and attract him—especially Lydia.

It was quite manifest that the mother and daughter clearly understood each other and worked together to effect one end.

They either worked so skillfully as to deceive the object of their machinations, or he had some cogent reasons for simulating the profoundest unconsciousness and blindness as to their designs, for he fell readily into their subtle traps, and they found in him an easy prey.

Thanks to the clever manoeuvring of the mother, he was continually left alone with the daughter, and as he evinced no signs of rebellion or disinclination, but submitted with remarkable passiveness and docility, they flattered themselves that their strenuous efforts had had the desired effect, and that he was already deeply enamoured of Lydia.

On the strength of this belief, and intoxicated with their apparent success, they waxed bolder and acted in so open and undisguised a manner that Mr. Moudray must have been blind indeed if he did not discover their intents, which, to all appearance, he did not.

Each day found them more sanguine and confident of the ultimate success of their schemes, although it must be confessed that despite the many snares they laid for him no indication of affection ever escaped him, and had they not so effectually blinded themselves with false assurance they would have seen to their dismay that he was singularly cautious, both in word and deed, and that his conduct toward Lydia was never for a moment anything more than that of a courteous gentleman to one of the opposite sex.

With Maggie, however, there was a remarkable difference in his manner. Although the schemers exercised the most jealous vigilance in order that their aims should not be subverted by any unforeseen circumstance, he managed to steal many a pleasant chat with her without their cognition.

There being a total absence of all concealment, hypocrisy, and nonsensical affectation about her, her true character was easily defined by a less keen observer than Mr. Moudray.

He seemed to find a singular charm in the pure-minded, ingenuous girl, and to like to gaze into her bright, beautiful eyes and hear her gentle, soft voice.

He seemed to understand and appreciate her as no one else did, and made her heart palpitate strangely and gladly by his gentleness and brother-like kindness.

One afternoon she was walking briskly along, bound on some domestic mission, when she came face to face with Mr. Moudray.

"Where are you going to, my pretty maid?" he asked, with a pleasant smile.

"Going a - shopping, kind sir, I say," she answered, looking up saucily into his face.

"May I come with you?"

"Just as you please, sir," she cried, with a musical little laugh, heartily entering into the humour of the whim, and enjoying it immensely.

Mr. Moudray did please, and with her small, white hand on his arm walked by her side. It was an opportunity he had sought for, and he resolved to make the most of it.

"Wouldn't you like to smoke, Mr. Moudray? If so, don't mind me," she said, more to break the awkward silence which ensued than anything else.

"Many thanks for thinking of it, but I would not for the world commit such a trespass upon good breeding," he replied, and another silence followed.

"A penny for your thoughts," he presently said, with a playful smile.

"You'd make a very bad bargain, Mr. Moudray," she said, with a faint blush.

"No, that I'm sure I shouldn't," he declared, stoutly. "Come, won't you sell them?"

"I was only thinking of poor father," she replied, with a sigh. "Poor old dear! he does seem so utterly wretched and broken-spirited."

"Don't wonder at it; crushed and hen-pecked by that atrocious vixen, confound her!" he muttered, savagely, to himself.

"He has had a deal of trouble, has he not?" he asked, aloud.

"Oh, yes, he has had a dreadfully hard time. He was rich once and considered by those who did not know him as I did, a hard, proud, haughty man. Now look how meek and broken-spirited he is! You would not wonder at it if you knew what he has passed through. You cannot think, Mr. Moudray, how happy we were once. He had the best of wives and I the dearest, kindest of mothers. But suddenly she was taken from us, and whether it was that her loss preyed upon his mind and destroyed his usually cool judgment I don't know, but after she was gone everything seemed to go against him in his business."

"He took to speculating largely, did he not?" he inquired, quietly and thoughtfully.

"Oh, yes, I believe so—enormously and disastrously—and got involved in difficulties, and to complete his misfortunes, somehow or other got in the hands of a merciless, hard old man."

"Ah, Mr. Daniel Grip?" muttered Mr. Moudray, abstractedly, his face darkening.

"Why! how do you know?" she asked, in surprise.

He started and bit his lip, a strange expression of vexation and impatience stealing over his face.

"Oh, your father was telling me about it the other evening," he replied, coolly, with a smile. "Did you ever see this old man?" he asked, curiously.

"Yes, once," she returned, hesitatingly.

"How and where?"

"You—you'll laugh at me if I tell you."

"No, upon my life, I will not," he said, gazing at her with strange curiosity.

"Well, then, I'll tell you. This old man had got my poor father firmly in his clutches and was playing with him and torturing him like a cat with a mouse. He drove him nearly out of his mind, and it was terrible to see him. One day he came to me almost frantic and weeping like a child—I had never seen him shed a tear before—told me how this wicked old usurer was tormenting him and was going to ruin him. I was only a silly, helpless little thing of sixteen—I'm afraid I'm not much better now—and didn't understand anything about business matters. But I couldn't bear to see my father's misery and sufferings, and—well, I was rash enough to beard the old lion in his den—a nasty little office in the City."

"Went to plead your father's cause with the old monster, eh?" cried Mr. Moudray, the clouds of perplexity fading from his face.

"Yes; it was a very ridiculous thing to do, wasn't it?"

"You were a very plucky-spirited little girl," he answered, gazing at her blushing face in great admiration. "I hope you gave the old rascal a thorough good jacketing. But how did he receive you?"

"Oh, he seemed very much astonished at my boldness, and stared at me with his small, glistening, cold eyes, as if he wanted to take my portrait. Then he sneered and laughed at me, made me lose my temper and cry, and then tried to frighten me and told me to go home and mind my business."

"What an atrocious old monster," cried Mr. Moudray, with a grim smile.

"Yes; poor father's lot is a very hard one to bear," she said, after a brief pause; "very hard to be so poor after being so rich; so lonely after being surrounded by friends; so misunderstood after being so appreciated and perfectly understood by my own dear mother!"

"And what of your lot, my little one?" he asked, tenderly and compassionately.

"Oh, I'm nobody! only poor Cinderella," she

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returned, with a bright smile, but an involuntary sigh.

"Ah, truly," he muttered to himself, angrily, "and when you are alone keeping company with the crickets do you, like your prototype, ever dream of the beautiful prince that is to come one day?" he said, with a playful smile, and his keen black eyes fixed tenderly upon her downcast face. "I'll be bound you do. Now what might your fancy picture him as being? Come, describe him to me."

She gave a quick glance at the tall, manly form and handsome, smiling face beside her and dropped her eyes again. She did not reply, but only shook her head.

If the truth were known she had not far to look for the embodiment of her ideal.

"Ah, Miss Maggie! you teach me a lesson," he said, with a sigh, after a brief silence.

"I, Mr. Moudray?" she cried, raising her eyes to his face in surprise. "How?"

"By bearing your troubles so bravely and patiently, by being so indomitably cheerful and never complaining, while I—well—am quite the reverse. You wonder why? Because I'm alone in the world with no one to care for me or care for. I had no one to miss me or wish me good bye with regret when I left England many years ago, and when I returned there was no familiar face to brighten up and welcome me—no, not one. I can't tell you how I wish I had a sister."

"Nor I how I wish I had a brother," she said, impulsively.

"Come, then, suppose we play the brother and sister?" he cried, suddenly and eagerly.

Maggie's heart gave a great bound and palpitated rapidly.

So whimsical a notion from so grave a man whom she had always a little feared astonished her beyond all expression. She glanced up at his face to see if he were only jesting, but what she saw there told her plainly that he was deeply in earnest.

She was strangely agitated and flurried and scarcely knew what to answer.

"Yes, but—but—only when by ourselves," she returned, shyly, and with some hesitation, which he understood.

"Confound it! why shouldn't I?" Mr. Moudray muttered, after a long, thoughtful pause, pulling his heavy moustache and impatiently deliberating with himself.

"I'll tell you what, sister," he said, with a smile, "we'll celebrate the occasion by indulging in a little worldly frivolity together and go to the play to-night."

"But, brother—"

"No buts in the question, sister. You get your marketing over and I'll manage the rest."

Imagine the surprise of the mother and daughter half an hour later when Maggie returns home accompanied by Mr. Moudray. They glanced at each other in amazement and dismay, and at Maggie in a manner that baffles description.

But the worst for them was yet to come.

"I've come to beg a favour at your hands, madam," said Mr. Moudray, with one of his irresistible smiles.

"And nothing could give me greater pleasure than to grant it, whatever it may be," declared Mrs. Timberley, graciously, but extremely perplexed and uneasy.

"You are exceedingly kind, madam. It's that you will permit your daughter to accompany me to the play to-night."

"How kind of you!" cried she, infinitely relieved and gratified. "Lydia will—"

"Pardon me, madam, you misapprehend me. I should have said your step-daughter, Miss Maggie," he hurriedly explained, not without a grim smile.

Mrs. Timberley bit her lips and could hardly contain her rage and mortification. She and her daughter glanced at each other with augmented surprise and consternation, and at Maggie with concentrated anger and malevolence.

"Oh, of course, sir, if you desire it," returned Mrs. Timberley, putting a good face on the

matter and restraining herself, "but I fear you will find the poor child a very dull, uninteresting companion. It is singularly kind and self-abnegating of you, but I really can't allow you to endure such boredom. Lydia, I'm sure, would be only too happy—"

"And nothing could give me greater pleasure than to accept such an honour and privilege, but I can't be so basely selfish and inconsiderate as to permit of her making such a sacrifice for my sake as to forsake the domestic quiet and peace, which I know she cherishes so dearly, for the heat and noise of a theatre, which I am aware she holds in such aversion," he returned, with a most unequivocal sneer, bowing low to Lydia, who, piqued and angered beyond concealment, disdainfully tossed her head.

Thus adroitly did he gain his point.

And shortly after they departed to spend an evening of the purest delight and enchantment to Maggie, at least, while Lydia gave vent to her rage, jealousy and mortification in a paroxysm of hysterical weeping, and Mrs. Timberley in storming and clamorously vituperating her meek, broken-spirited consort, and vowing vengeance on Maggie.

### CHAPTER III.

THE occurrence of that evening rendered the scheming mother and daughter at first somewhat dubious and uneasy.

The former possessed a ridiculously exaggerated idea of the latter's powers of attraction, and Lydia of her own, and both so poor an opinion of Maggie's that the bare hypothesis that she should prove a dangerous rival seemed to them the wildest absurdity. So they with little difficulty reassured themselves.

They were, however, become exceedingly impatient and irritated by Mr. Moudray's circumspection, and determined to use their utmost endeavours to inveigle him into compromising himself and thus bring the matter to a climax.

With this view Lydia altered her tactics, and in place of the cordiality and eagerness to please which she had previously displayed treated him with capricious coolness and indifference.

Much to their dismay and alarm the result was diametrically opposite to what they anticipated.

Instead of exciting amazement and distress, and driving him in sheer desperation to disclose unmistakably his intentions and make some compromising profession as they ardently hoped, he at first simulated not to notice the change in her demeanour, and when he could no longer ignore it with any appearance of genuineness he treated it with contemptuous indifference, grew colder and more reserved and gradually became less frequent in his attendance upon them.

The astute, calculating mother saw that their new move was a dismal failure and if persisted in could only terminate in a disastrous subversion of all their careful schemes. She brought into action all the persuasions and inducements she could command to prevail upon her daughter to conquer and subdue her haughty pride and make overtures of reconciliation, but all in vain.

Thanks to the detestable principles with which she had imbued her from her cradle upwards, Lydia had learned to school her heart and make it entirely subservient to mercenary aims and ambitions.

But now there stole over her the bitter consciousness that love was omnipotent and indomitable, and that, notwithstanding the unremitting inflexible vigilance she exercised over herself, she now loved—loved desperately and fervently.

She felt her love was unreciprocated, unsought and hopeless, and this bitter knowledge filled her with fierce, passionate self-scorn and intense anger and deadly enmity against the object of her love; her piqued, haughty spirit and pride endowed her with requisite strength to successfully conceal this, but she drove her mother to

despair by obdurately refusing to be guided by her advice and alter her unpromising, ruinous line of conduct and effect a reconciliation.

The mother did her utmost to bring this about.

Her rage, mortification and enmity against Mr. Moudray were no less intense and virulent, but she also had cogent reasons for concealment, for he was rich and in every way most desirable game, and well worth the trouble of bagging.

As his conduct towards them became cold and distant, Mr. Moudray gradually threw off all reserve and devoted himself almost exclusively to Maggie.

This exasperated them beyond endurance and changed their mere ill-feeling and indifference into fierce jealousy and hatred against the poor, helpless girl. Her life became almost unendurable.

In addition to the harshness and systematic unkindness with which they had always treated her, she now had to suffer all that malice and malignant jealousy could invent.

Mr. Moudray evoked this upon her unconsciously, for, actuated by the same motives as just mentioned, they took good care to keep him in ignorance, and Maggie, though broken-hearted and driven to despair, did not undeceive him.

But one evening his eyes were opened and his enlightenment was the beginning of a string of remarkable incidents.

He was passing the little sitting-room where Maggie and her father generally spent their evenings at the express commands of the step-mother, when he was startled by the sound of someone sobbing bitterly. He was greatly surprised, and noiselessly entered.

There was no light but the blazing fire, which revealed to him a cumbent form upon the ground with its face buried in its hands.

He was petrified with amazement, for it was Maggie weeping bitterly and piteously. He partly closed the door and went towards her.

"Maggie!" he cried, tenderly, bending over her.

She raised her head with a quick, startled gesture, and turned a pale, quivering face suffused with tears towards him in piteous, mute supplication.

With a rapidly beating heart and great perturbation he raised and soothed her as though she were a child.

"Come, come, little sister, what is it?" he asked, in a tremulous voice.

"Oh, Mr. Moudray, you don't, you can't know what I have to submit to and suffer!" she cried, wildly, in a burst of passionate grief. "I've tried to bear up and be patient, but—but—they provoke and drive me to despair. I can't, I won't submit to such ill usage!"

"Whose, my dear?" he asked, with unspeakable compassion and gentleness in his tone.

"That woman's who has dared to take the place my mother occupied, and her daughter, Lydia. I have striven, you can't tell how diligently, to gain their love by patience and submissive obedience, but they have only repaid me by trying to crush and break my heart and spirits and drive me frantic with their slights and insults and unkindness. Oh, Mr. Moudray, you can't tell what I have had to submit to and endure. They have made me hate them against my will."

"And Heaven knows you have cause to, my dear. The base, insufferable creatures!" he exclaimed, with great vehemence and anger, drawing her yielding form still closer to him.

"You don't know them as I do, Mr. Moudray. They deceive and blind you as to their true character," she bitterly cried, giving vent to the feelings which their years of ill-treatment had engendered, but which she had ever subdued—her tears subsiding and giving place to hot indignation and anger. "They are base, plotting creatures! Yes, it is my duty to warn you. They have set their net for you, and because you have disappointed them vent their spite and rage upon me. Oh, you can't know how they've insulted and tormented me in their mad jealousy and anger!"

"Good Heavens! I see it all now," he exclaimed, beyond himself with scornful indignation and self-reproach. "I have brought this upon you by exciting these despicable creatures' jealousy. Forgive me, Maggie, I have been a selfish, thoughtless fool. Listen to me, my dear," he said, quietly, after a brief, thoughtful pause. "It was not merely chance that led me to this house."

She started and looked at him in surprise and wonderment.

"Why I came here you may perhaps learn some day," he continued, with a peculiar smile. "The very first night I entered this house I read those women's characters. I have had potent reasons for appearing blind, but they have not deceived me so effectually as they imagine. I have seen through their miserable, disgusting schemings and plottings, and all along have been fully aware of their designs. I have loathed and despised them from the first."

"But—but—yet you have—" faltered Maggie, in direful perplexity.

"Yes, while holding them in the greatest aversion, I have intimately associated with them," he smilingly said. "You wonder why? Simply to watch you, Maggie—do not start, my dear—to watch you and learn your character also. Believe me, if it had not been for your presence and the privilege of your intimate acquaintance, I would have fled from this house as from a plague. But see what I have gained by remaining—the best, prettiest and dearest little sister," he cried, playfully, but very tenderly. "I have seen you, my brave little girl, slighted, insulted and ill-treated, yet ever gentle, forgiving and cheerful. I have witnessed their treatment of you in silence, but with unspeakable disgust. I have longed to defy them and defend you overtly, but durst not for fear of provoking their jealousy and spite against you, and thus make your hard lot still harder to bear. This I find I have inadvertently done, and in this only have they blinded me. They shall do so no longer, for this very night I leave the house—"

"What! going away, Mr. Moudray?" and the tone in which it was said made his eyes sparkle and heart violently throb with excitement, hope and gladness.

But with a great effort he restrained himself and concealed his emotion from her.

"Yes, to-night! But have courage, my brave little Cinderella," he said, bending down and tenderly kissing her flushing face in a brotherly sort of way. "Be patient a little longer, and who knows but what some fortunate rogue of a prince will come and release you from your toralldom by wedding you? So cheer up, little sis, and whatever happens be guided wholly and solely by your own heart and by nothing else. Remember this—be quite sure and make no mistake. Good bye, I shall return in a few days, and—"

"Never!" cried a sibilant voice, choking with passion.

And Mrs. Timberley, quivering with rage, bounced into the room, followed by Lydia, who darted a glance of concentrated jealousy and malevolence at them.

Mr. Moudray for the moment seemed quite bewildered, while Maggie instinctively drew closer to him for protection. He instantly recovered himself, and with his keen, black eyes fixed fearlessly and scornfully upon them, and his arm protectingly about Maggie, waited for them to speak.

"Heavens! That I should have fostered such an unprincipled monster!" ejaculated Mrs. Timberley, at last, beating the floor with her foot, and sanctimoniously casting up her eyes.

She was burning to say something withering and cutting, but so completely was she delivered over to venement rage that she for once in her life lost the use of her usually ready tongue.

"His brave little Cinderella! Ha! ha! ha!" exclaimed Lydia, in a sneering tone, her face and form darkened and dilated with passion and hatred fearful to behold.

"So you have been playing the part of pry-

ing eavesdroppers?" said Mr. Moudray, with ineffable contempt and disgust.

"Yes, we have," cried Mrs. Timberley, with malicious eagerness and exultation, "and heard every word—there!"

"Upon my honour, this is worse than all!" he muttered.

"His honour! Listen to him, mamma!" sneered Lydia, with an hysterical laugh.

"Your honour!" shrieked Mrs. Timberley, with violent disdain and a righteous shudder, recovering at length the use of her trusty weapon—her tongue. "Pretty honour, to be sure, forcing your odious self upon us; notwithstanding the pains we took to show you how we resented your impertinent intrusion, imposing upon and taking a mean advantage of our generous compassion for your friendlessness, which allow me to inform you, was all that actuated us in tolerating and associating with you, professing the strongest regard and friendship for us before our faces, while like the mean, crawling coward that you are, in your puny spite and envy reviling and slandering us behind our backs to such a miserable, two-faced little wretch as that!" she hissed, pointing at Maggie.

Mr. Moudray, exasperatingly cool and calm, stood beside Maggie, regarding them with a cold, bitter smile, in scornful silence.

"I've been thinking, mamma, that we might take a boarder! How sweetly innocent and ingenuous!" sneered Lydia, desiring to direct her mother's rage upon Maggie. "It was not merely chance that brought him to this house, you know, mamma!"

"Oh, you worthless hussy! I see it all now," declared Mrs. Timberley, started and dumfounded, and glaring fiercely at Maggie. "This is your doings—"

"It's a falsehood, she is as innocent— But enough, madam," cried Mr. Moudray, only by a violent effort controlling his temper. "You confess to having heard what I said respecting you. I own appearances are against me, and that it was wrong and unwise of me to let my feelings betray me into using such forcible expressions concerning you behind your backs. I don't, however, regret or retract one syllable, but openly and to your faces reiterate and endorse every word I uttered, for Heaven knows your conduct justifies them."

"Oh, you abominable creature!" exclaimed Mrs. Timberley, looking a perfect fury. "Leave this house this instant, and never enter—"

"Good bye, Maggie," he interrupted, coolly bending down and kissing her. "Have no fear, be brave a little longer and all will be well," he whispered to her earnestly. "Good bye, Maggie. I shall return in a few days," he said, aloud, before he withdrew, looking steadily and defiantly at the mother and daughter.

And shortly after he left the house.

What Maggie suffered and had to endure after he had gone we will leave our readers to imagine, and hasten on to the subsequent day, which proved one of bewildering surprises.

It began by Maggie's receiving a letter in which Mr. Jonas Spindleweb presented his compliments to Miss Maggie Timberley and begged to inform her that he would do himself the honour of waiting upon her at noon that day on business of the most vital importance.

The mystification and wild speculation the receipt of this epistle excited, and the restless excitement and impatience with which its explanation was awaited, words cannot adequately convey.

At length twelve o'clock came, and Mr. Spindleweb, with whom our readers are already acquainted, came with it, and begged an interview with Maggie alone. With great celerity he was conducted into her presence and left alone with her.

"How do you do, my dear?" he cried, hopping towards her, shaking her hand, and looking at her with the air of a connoisseur regarding some cherished masterpiece. "Pray compose yourself and don't be alarmed. My business with you is of a highly pleasant nature, and I will relieve you of all suspense by being as brief as possible."

With that he sat down, and with considerate brevity and sententiousness made her acquainted with the terms and conditions of Daniel Grip's will—she being the vitally interested young lady referred to in our first chapter.

She heard him patiently to the finish in profound silence, and without evincing any emotion, which somewhat astonished the old attorney.

"Allow me to congratulate you, my dear young lady," he cried, when he had finished, rising stiffly, bowing, and gazing at her thoughtful, abstracted face in droll perplexity, and something remarkably like disappointment. "Of course you are willing to comply with the one condition—"

"No, I can't, I can't indeed, sir!" she returned, suddenly, and with obdurate determination.

"My dear?" faltered Mr. Spindleweb, in astonishment, but with a peculiar pleased look lurking about his bird-like face. "You can't wish to imply that you refuse?"

"Yes, I do refuse, unconditionally and finally, to sell myself for this wicked old usurer's money," she cried, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes. "I can't, I won't do it. That is my answer, sir, and nothing on earth can or shall move me."

"Tut, tut, child, you are too precipitate," he returned, petulantly, hopping up and down the room in obvious perturbation, but keeping his face averted from her.

"I fear, I—I—anger you?" she faltered, hesitatingly, puzzled by the old man's remarkable proceedings.

"You—you do exceedingly—that is to say, God bless you, my dear," he cried, and to Maggie's infinite surprise pouncing suddenly upon her and fervently kissing her cheek.

"Pardon me, my dear; don't mind me, I'm only a stupid, dull old man," he said, apologetically and hurriedly, a little terrified at what he had done, and looking so kind and pleasant and so completely metamorphosed that she could scarcely believe he was the same phlegmatic, matter-of-fact business man of a few moments ago.

"Now let me advise you in a friendly and unprofessional way," he said, seating himself close beside her. "I have been in communication with Mr. Grip's nephew, who is at the present moment abroad, and he authorises me to say that he is quite ready and willing to obey his deceased uncle's command in respect to you, and will do himself the honour of making your acquaintance on his return, in a few days—in fact this day week. Now, I don't wish to pry into your little secrets, my dear, but in order that I may the better be able to advise you may I inquire what actuated you in giving so prompt and emphatic an answer in this most momentous matter? Is it because your heart and affections are already engaged and disposed of?"

His manner was so gentle and kind that she knew he was prompted by something more than vulgar curiosity, and she felt very grateful towards him.

She did not reply, but drooped her head in pretty confusion and a tell-tale blush suffused her face under his searching gaze.

"Very well, my dear, your silence tells me such is the case," he resumed, with a pleased smile. "Now, take the advice of an old man; keep your own counsels, consult your heart and happiness solely in this matter; agree to receive the nephew's visit, and if when you see him and are acquainted with him you are still of the same mind tell him flat to his face that you won't have him and that he and his uncle's money can go to—to Bath. You apprehend my meaning?"

"Perfectly, sir, and I'm much obliged for your kind advice," she returned, warmly, extending her hand, which he raised to his lips with antiquated gallantry; "and I will not fail to follow it."

During this mysterious interview Mrs. Timberley, burning with curiosity, was stationed at the keyhole, striving her utmost to discover what it was all about. But owing to the exasperat-



ingly low tone in which it was conducted, she had only caught a word here and there, which sufficed to utterly bewilder her and exacerbate her curiosity to an insupportable degree.

We will not attempt to depict the amazement and secret rage and envy of Mrs. Timberley and Lydia on learning all from the attorney; nor will we dwell upon how she swallowed her pride and arrogance, made a miserable attempt at extenuating her past conduct, and tendered the abjectest and lamest apologies, and with effusive professions of ardent affection and repentance craved forgiveness and became the incarnation of despicable servility and warmest love for the girl she had always despised, insulted, and shamefully ill-treated.

The week that followed was the most trying in Maggie's troubled life. She was stupefied and bewildered with what had befallen her. It was all like a dream to her, for everything was changed about her as if by magic.

In place of snubs, contempt, and unkindness she was overwhelmed by laborious kindness, effusive caresses, and made a perfect idol of. But preponderating over every thought was a firm, unflinching resolution to adhere to her first decision and follow the astute old lawyer's sapient advice.

He had read her secret aright. Her whole heart had long since been given to Mr. Moudray, and her love for him was more precious than untold wealth.

Was her love reciprocated? She asked herself this question a thousand times. Sometimes her joyous, fluttering heart would return a confident yes. Sometimes it sank and answered a doleful no. For, pondering over his every word and action, she could discover nothing indicative of anything but the affection of a generous brother towards her.

She ruminated over what had passed between them on the night of his departure. His words puzzled and perplexed her. They seemed to her now to contain a startling significance—as if he were cognisant of what was impending and wished to prepare her for some astounding event.

He promised her he would return in a few days. How eagerly she awaited his coming, for without knowing why she felt he would terminate all that was tormenting and puzzling her. But she waited in vain, for the momentous evening arrived with no tidings of him.

Yes, the important evening was come at last, and the Timberleys were seated together in the drawing-room impatiently awaiting the advent of Maggie's wooer and participator in the old usurer's riches.

Maggie had followed the attorney's advice and kept her own counsel. She held out no hope, but they interpreted her silence as meaning compliance. She was poignantly aware of this, and dreaded having to dissipate their dazzling hopes and anticipations by undecieving them.

But though exceedingly agitated and discomposed at the trying ordeal immediately before her, she was inflexibly determined to execute it without faltering.

Suddenly, when their restless expectancy had reached its culmination and become well nigh insupportable, they were startled by the sounds of footsteps ascending the stairs.

Mrs. Timberley rose from her seat with a hasty motion to the others to prepare themselves and stood in readiness to overwhelm the distinguished visitor with the elegance and warmth of her welcome.

The door opened and Mr. Spindleweb entered.

"Allow me to introduce my client, Mr. Sydney Raymond," he cried, with a low bow, and waving his hand towards the door.

All turned their eyes thither and gave a violent start. Mrs. Timberley loudly exclaimed and stood on the same spot dumbfounded and as if she were turned to stone; while her husband and daughter were similarly afflicted, for there stood, cool, calm, and grimly smiling at their astonishment, no other than their late boarder!

With a thumping heart and whirling and confused senses Maggie sprang to her feet. She had

worked herself up into the highest pitch of nervous excitement and the startling surprise was too much for her; she reeled and would have fallen but Mr. Raymond dashed forward and caught her in his arms, and by tender whispers and caresses soon composed and revived her.

"Mr. Moudray!" exclaimed Mrs. Timberley, blankly.

"Pardon me, madam, you misunderstand me—Mr. Raymond, not Moudray," said the attorney, with a smile of malicious delight.

"What—what on earth does this mean?" she asked of him, in hopeless bewilderment.

"I must refer you to my client for an explanation," he returned, simulating to share in the general bewilderment, but secretly enjoying it immensely.

The dreadful truth flashed upon her and completely crushed her with dismay. She was utterly undone, and felt ready to sink into the earth. She dropped into a chair and fanned her hot face with her handkerchief in hopeless abandonment.

"You see, dearest, I have fulfilled my promise," whispered Mr. Raymond, tenderly, gazing into Maggie's flushed, radiant face, and pressing her to him. "Courage, little one, and all shall be explained."

"You peroxide, madam, I have been bold enough to dare your august displeasure and return as promised," he said, turning to Mrs. Timberley and ironically smiling.

"My dear sir, pray," she began, effusively, rallying her scattered faculties by a violent effort.

"Mamma, for Heaven's sake don't degrade yourself," implored Lydia—who was consumed with malignant anger and jealousy—with passionate scorn.

"Hush, my child, I must speak. My dear Mr. Raymond, pray take pity upon me and forget what has passed between us. I cannot express—"

"You can spare yourself the trouble, madam. You have already excited my profoundest pity," returned Mr. Raymond, contemptuously, and with a glance that completely withered her, and she sank back into her chair again dismayed and vanquished.

"To you, sir, and your daughter I still owe some explanation," he said, turning to poor, bewildered Mr. Timberley and grasping his hand.

"You—you are exceedingly kind, sir," he said, awaking with a start and warily returning his grasp.

"It was not mere chance that led me to become an inmate of your house, as my friend and fellow-conspirator, Mr. Spindleweb, can testify."

The little old attorney gave an affirmative nod, and smiled sagaciously and significantly at Maggie.

"It came to pass in this way. On the night of my return to England after an absence of many years in Australia, I discovered in a most fortuitous manner that by applying to Mr. Spindleweb I should hear of something greatly to my advantage. Accordingly next morning I repaired to his office, and he made me cognisant with the fact that my uncle, who had refused me the barest assistance when I was a poor, friendless, helpless boy, and Heaven knows, needed it, had died leaving me his money on the condition that I married your daughter."

"He was a bad, inexorable old man—a hard, merciless old man," muttered Mr. Timberley, bitterly. "How he tortured and tormented me!"

"But, strange to say, he repented it. At first I was at a loss to conceive what actuated him in turning matchmaker. But by putting this and that together I am convinced that it was to make amends for his merciless treatment of you in this indirect, subtle manner."

"But to resume. I at first scornfully refused to comply with this unreasonable condition, but my friend, Mr. Spindleweb, who it appears had kept his eye upon you and your daughter and made himself thoroughly conversant with your history, characters and proceedings, pointed out

your advertisement for a boarder, and suggested that I should offer myself, and if possible take up my abode with you. I was to assume a false name and leave you all in total ignorance of all connected with my uncle's will, and by these means become acquainted with your daughter's true character, and, in plain language, see how I liked her.

"I was alone and friendless, and it was so whimsical an idea that I determined to carry it into execution—more out of love for the adventurous than anything else—and without the slightest notion of its altering my first decision. In fact, I must confess that I was determined that it should not do so."

"Consequently I came here, full of obstinate, foolish prejudices against her, and a firm resolve to utterly despise and dislike her," he said, smiling at Maggie's astonishment and wonder.

"When I first saw her I could not help admiring her, and when I knew her I could not help loving her. Well, sir, why need I particularise? You will not wonder, I am sure, that she should have utterly vanquished my insane prejudices and dissipated my absurd resolutions and become dearer to me than life itself."

"No, to be sure; stranger things happen every day," observed the attorney, with infinite delight.

"God bless you, my dear Maggie," cried the happy father, with warm sincerity, taking her to him, "Heaven knows you have ever been to me the best of daughters and my sole comfort and solace in times of trouble and adversity."

"How irresistibly affecting," cried Mrs. Timberley, trying her hardest to squeeze out a tear or two, but dismally failing.

"Sweet child! Who could help loving her to adoration?" she cried, with a melting look at Mr. Raymond.

"Who, indeed?" he repeated, sternly, fixing his eyes scornfully upon her; and she immediately relapsed into her former forlorn condition; "seeing her as I have seen her, slighted and neglected to such a degree that it has made my blood boil within me, and suffering all that base selfishness and unkindness and narrow-minded jealousy and spite could contrive, yet ever gentle, forgiving and uncomplaining withal."

"Come, Mr. Raymond, won't you be friends, and let by-gones be by-gones?" cried Mrs. Timberley, making a last desperate effort, much to Lydia's disgust and rage.

"I bear no malice, and am quite willing to let by-gones be by-gones—"

"Oh, my dear Mr. Raymond! how kind, how magnanimous," she exclaimed, effusively, transported with delight, and extending both hands.

"You mistake me, madam," he said, drawing back coldly and disdainfully, and she gave up all hope and abandoned herself to tears of bitter disappointment and defeat, "our paths in the future must lie far apart."

"No, Maggie, my dear little wife, we will journey—" he began, drawing her tenderly to him.

"Pardon me, my dear sir, but—but—it is my exceedingly painful duty to inform you that you are labouring under a delusion," remarked the old attorney, with well-feigned gravity, but with a roguish twinkle in his eye.

"I shouldn't wonder if I were; I can scarcely believe my supreme happiness," returned Mr. Raymond, his handsome face radiant with infinite gladness. "But come, my friend, discharge your painful duty."

"Alas! I regret to have to inform you that it is the young lady's inflexible determination, which nothing on earth can move, to send you and your uncle's money to the—ahem!—you know who! Is it not so?" he asked, with roguish delectation, of Maggie.

Her answer was fully expressed in the look of unspeakable love and unflinching trust which she gave Mr. Raymond.

"Then you're a shameful little turn-coat," cried Mr. Spindleweb, beaming upon her and looking greatly inclined to follow her lover's example and kiss her radiant face.

"Maggie, my own darling," whispered Mr.



["WHERE DID YOU GET THE NECKLACE? ANSWER ME TRUTHFULLY."]

Raymond, "I thought and ardently hoped that I had won your heart, but was not quite sure. But I am sure now, for I know from Mr. Spindleweb what passed between you and him—unflinchingly you stood the terrible test I put your love to."

"Come, my dear, tell me that you forgive me for being such a wicked old dissembler," cried Mr. Spindleweb, approaching her with mock humility and fear. "Don't despise me, quite."

"Despise you! no, far from that," cried Maggie, giving him both her hands. "I owe you more than I can ever repay," she eagerly added, with a significant glance at Mr. Raymond.

"And I also, my trusty friend and fellow conspirator," cried the latter, with great animation and warmth, "for you have been the means of my acquiring a fortune, and—more precious and blessed still—this priceless, matchless jewel."

Before a month had elapsed our hero and heroine were married. They lived very quietly but supremely happy, bounteously blessed with Heaven's choicest gifts.

The little country town, "far from the madding crowd," in which they resided rang with heartfelt praises of their munificence, for to purposes of true benevolence did they turn the old usurer's ill-gotten affluence.

Thanks to their liberality, Mr. Timberley was relieved of all his heavy financial burdens, and

became an altered man, spending most of his remaining days in luxury, ease and peace, with Maggie and her husband.

Soon after the nuptials of his two clients, at which ceremony he officiated as best man, Mr. Spindleweb suddenly came to the conclusion that he had worked hard and long enough, and in a very short time exchanged his musty, dark little office for a pretty, neat little cottage hard by the Raymonds' residence, where he was a constant and warmly-welcomed guest.

Fortune eventually smiled upon Mrs. Timberley, and blessed with success her matrimonial schemes on behalf of her daughter Lydia; and she had the satisfaction of seeing her the wife and ruler of a mere boy with a remarkably soft heart and no brains to speak of, but an abundance of the needful, which left nothing to be desired.

## MABEL'S BIRTHDAY PRESENT.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

### CHAPTER I.

It was Mabel Leslie's birthday, and a clear, cold day in winter. The ground was covered with snow and the air filled with great white snowflakes which ever and anon dashed their fleecy

surface against the window where Mabel Leslie sat musing.

Since almost from the break of day had the young girl here reclined, her gaze cast longingly, expectantly down the country road that passed by her father's farmhouse, as if watching for someone to approach; but as the moments sped by and no one came her usually happy face assumed a somewhat disappointed aspect.

She was a lovely girl; not what would be styled strikingly handsome, yet pretty. Medium in stature and shapely in form, with bright, laughing eyes, fair complexion, rosy, health-blooming cheeks, dark, bronze-brown hair, whose long, thick tresses lay in graceful ringlets about her perfect neck, and, withal, a frankness and candour of expression which gave an irresistible charm to the countenance.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,  
So soft, so calm, so eloquent,  
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,  
But tell of days in goodness spent,  
A mind at peace with all below,  
A heart whose love is innocent.

In fact, Mabel came as near Byron's picture of purity and innocence as is possible, for her features were no false index of character, but a true criterion of the lady's mind.

On this winter's morning her thoughts ran back to early spring, when, in the flush of love's first passion, she had given her heart to the keeping of Fred Alden, an honest-minded youth from the great metropolis, whom business had called to the rural precinct of her home.

He was a handsome, straightforward fellow who, having been drawn toward the farmer's daughter, was quick to make his feelings known; and, pleased to find a responsive chord in the heart of her he loved, straightway solicited her hand in marriage.

"My boy," Farmer Leslie had said, when the young man proposed, "it is a great deal you ask, and you are almost a stranger to me."

"Very true, sir," was the reply. "But you must know it is no speedy union for which I crave. I am, comparatively speaking, a poor man, with naught but my trade with which to provide for myself and your daughter, and even should you give your consent some time must elapse before I could procure a suitable home for her. So that in the meantime you will have ample opportunity to know me better."

And then the good man had pondered, running his horny fingers through the knotty mass that covered his head, but finally gave his consent to the engagement.

Months had gone by since then, happy months to Mabel; and when in the autumn Fred Alden returned to town, the country maiden missed him sorely.

But he had promised to come and spend her birthday with her, and she sat at that window awaiting his coming.

Still he came not. What detained him? she asked herself. Was he ill, or had he forgotten her already? She could not tell, and the thought gave pain.

In momentary expectation she remained there, her faith in his coming growing fainter as the time slipped by, and had not her attention been attracted by the arrival of the morning mail she might have continued there throughout the day.

The spell was broken, however, and she hastened to ascertain the contents of the leather bag the boy had brought from the village. A letter for father, a parcel for mother, and a box directed to "Miss Mabel Leslie, Hopedale Farm," were the sum total.

It was a neatly "done-up" bundle, and the recipient lost no time in divesting it of its travel-stained wrapper. As she did so a tiny note fell to the floor, which read:

"DEAR MABEL.—Circumstances over which I have no control prevent me from spending this day with you, though to have done so would have afforded me much pleasure. I long for a look at your dear face, but must content myself with its remembrance, and while I cannot hope that you will not miss me I trust your birthday may be a joyous one. You will find a trinket within. Accept this token of my esteem. It



may perhaps seem too costly for my sphere in life; but fear not; it will speak for itself in the future. Hoping to be with you soon, I am yours,  
FRED ALDEN."

In a hurried, excited manner Mabel opened the case, revealing to her astonished vision a costly combination of gold and precious stones. The clouds cleared from her countenance as she gazed in wonder at the glittering mass. How her heart went out to the donor of the gift as she turned it over and over, each move displaying new lustre, each sight enhancing its value.

It was a necklace of almost priceless worth and of the finest workmanship and artistic mechanism. Its design, however, was not of modern pattern, but in a measure antique, while slight defacements here and there discernible gave evidence of prior use. Yet it was a handsome gift and the young lady appreciated it to its full extent.

"Mother! mother!" she cried, as in breathless excitement she bounded into the kitchen where the farmer's wife was engaged in preparing the dinner. "See what Fred has sent me as a birthday present! Isn't it nice? Just lovely!"

And the prize was held up for inspection. Mrs. Leslie stood back in amazement; no such magnificent piece of jewellery had ever before come within the range of her unsophisticated vision. She was at a loss what to make of it. Some time elapsed ere she could command her voice to speak, so greatly was the good dame bewildered.

"What did you say, Mabel?" at length she exclaimed, in surprise and incredulity. "Fred Alden sent you this?"

"Yes, mother, for a present," the girl reiterated. "Wasn't it nice of him?"

"Why, child," the lady returned, ignoring the latter part of her daughter's address, "that necklace is worth a hundred pounds if it is worth a penny; and where in the world of common sense could Fred Alden get such a large sum of money?"

"I'm sure I cannot tell," Mabel added, with a blush. "But of course he came by it honestly, and I'm glad he sent it, it has made me so happy."

"Well, well! May be so, may be so! Did he send any explanation as to how he became possessed of it?" the mother inquired, after a pause; and the note being shown her continued: "No doubt it's all right; so run along and send your thanks to him."

And pressing a loving kiss upon her indulgent parent's cheek Mabel hastened to her room to execute the bidding and return thanks to her lover for his munificent bestowment.

## CHAPTER II.

THAT evening Mabel went to the post-office to send a letter to her lover. Her homeward walk led by the residence of Squire Darling, with whose daughter Miss Leslie was on the most intimate terms, and as she neared the mansion the temptation to call proved irresistible. Just to pass the compliments of the day Mabel persuaded herself, but in reality to exhibit her lover's gift to the young lady of the house.

If Mrs. Leslie had failed to appreciate it fully Fanny Darling's enthusiasm must have amply made up for all deficiencies.

"It is just the loveliest thing I ever beheld," the aristocratic miss exclaimed; "and, Mabel Leslie, you are the most fortunate little sweetheart in our village. Aren't you proud of it?"

"Oh, yes! But it seems so grand that I am almost afraid it's all a dream, from which I shall awake to find myself sitting at the window dreaming of and looking for his coming."

"Fie! fie, my dear! Fear not, you are as wide awake as ever you were in your life. But here comes mamma; shall I show it to her?"

"Yes, certainly, if you wish."

The elaborately dressed Mrs. Darling took the trinket from her daughter's hand and with

haughty condescension permitted herself to examine it.

"Mabel Leslie," she exclaimed, in a tone of surprise and contempt, as she scanned the shrinking form after having scrutinised the article minutely, "where did you get this necklace? Answer me truthfully."

"Fred Alden sent it to me this morning," the young lady replied, surprised at the query and wondering the while why her hostess should exhibit such interest in the belongings of one so far below her in the social scale.

"And who is Fred Alden, pray?" the questioner continued.

But confusion and embarrassment were the only responses elicited. The petted daughter of the house of Darling, however, came to the rescue, saying:

"Fred Alden is Mabel's betrothed husband, mamma, and the necklace is his birthday gift to her. He is the young man who superintended the erection of the machinery in our new mill, to whom you professed to be so singularly drawn. You remember him, do you not?"

"You allude to the mechanic who visited your father here so frequently for instructions?"

"The same. I believe you said he resembled someone you had known in former years."

"Yes, yes, I recollect," the lady said. "That explains all."

A look of sorrow chased away the arrogant curl of the contemptuous lips.

"And he is your lover?" she added, turning to our heroine.

Mabel stammered out an affirmative answer, and Mrs. Darling continued:

"To whom you are engaged?"

"Yes."

"Since when?"

The answer given silence reigned for some moments. It was broken by Mrs. Darling, who, in a greatly changed manner from that she had at first maintained, addressed her visitor:

"Mabel," she said, "I am very sorry to blight your happiness or dispel the air-castles of future joy that have been built up in your trusting heart; still I am bound by the claims of justice to protect the innocent from the wiles of the world, and believe me I am sincere in my interest in your welfare. Fred Alden is not worthy of your esteem, for—"

"Madam!" exclaimed the girl.

"Hear me out, my child, without interruption. I was about to say—for in him you as well as myself have been greatly deceived—the necklace which he has presented to you is the one that was missed from this house last summer, and of which you have often heard me speak. It was a prized treasure of my girlhood's days, and its loss has grieved me much. So you see that your professed admirer must have—"

"stolen it," she was about to add. But Mabel heard no more. The cruel words of accusation cut her to the quick and rendered her brain a chaos of confusion. Her faculties were benumbed; she could raise no voice in defence of the man she loved.

Not that she gave credence to the overwhelming facts which loomed up before her, for she would have believed her lover innocent in the face of the verdict of a jury, so great was her confidence in his integrity. Yet the circumstances were appalling and filled her with concern.

"Oh! no, no!" she cried. "It cannot be! My Fred a thief and have the audacity to make me the recipient of his plunder? No, no! It cannot be! It is too absurd!"

"Calm yourself, Miss Leslie; such emotion is unbecoming a well-bred young girl, and entirely thrown away. Be kind enough to give me the address of the young man. As the necklace is my property I shall retain it."

The desired address was given, after which the all but broken-hearted girl departed for home, there to confide her trouble to her mother.

Sympathy and condolence greeted her there, lavished as only a parent can; yet with little effect.

"Do not take it so to heart, my child," the fond mother pleaded; "all may yet be explained; there must be a mistake somewhere."

"Of course there's a mistake," sobbed the girl. "But, mother, it is so hard to think even for a moment that he would be guilty of such an act."

And thus in agony and pain the day which had dawned so radiantly passed away.

The night brought little rest to the troubled child—for she was little more than a child. All through the long, dark hours she tossed upon her pillow, courting sleep, yet finding it not.

Dismal and drear passed the time, and the visions which floated before her mind's eye were cheerless and repulsive, causing her to shudder in mere contemplation.

Now she would doze, to see her hero in the clutches of relentless law; then, in fancy, she would picture him in some dark prison cell, his manly form weighted with manacles of iron, crouching there in unutterable agony, pleading for mercy, yet sternly denying the accusation and proclaiming his innocence. She would rise in her slumbers as if to go to his rescue.

Again he would appear, asking her to believe him innocent. First one thing, then another. It was a night of the most excruciating misery and terrible pain.

Slowly the hours passed—how slowly none can realise but those who, when in the midst of great vicissitudes, have watched through the lonely darkness for the dawning of the day.

And when at last the heavy mantle was lifted from the earth she hailed the bright light with pleasure, yet it brought little consolation.

## CHAPTER III.

SEVERAL days had passed since the occurrence of the events related in the preceding chapter, and during that time many incidents had transpired which go toward the development of our tale.

A demand had been received at the police head-quarters of the great metropolis for the arrest of one Fred Alden, a mechanic, on the charge of theft. Pursuant to this a warrant had been issued claiming that he had stolen a valuable necklace, the property of Mrs. Darling, and he had been taken into custody while at work among his fellows.

To-day the young man was lodged in a prison cell, the associate of some of the worst rogues the country could produce.

His arrest had been a touching scene, bringing tears to the eyes of many a hardy son of toil.

"Shopmates," he had said, as the officers led him forth, "I am innocent."

And, to give the men their due, not one in the entire shop doubted the assertion.

There were honest-hearted men among the number, some of whom had known the lad for many months, and respected him highly for his ability as a labourer and his integrity as a friend.

It pained them to see him thus branded before a curious public, whose sympathies are generally with the strong, and some of them would have clubbed together and secured the best counsel attainable, while his employers even offered him bail.

But he would not have it, and, thanking them for their kindness, declined the proffered aid.

"Save your money, men," the brave youth said, when they strove to press their good intentions upon him. "You need all you have, and more too. I require no lawyer to plead my case, but simply ask a fair trial. I am an honest man, and such will prove myself to be in the end."

Thus matters stood.

In due course of time the trial came on, and Fred Alden stood in the felon's dock, arraigned upon the charge before mentioned. The circumstances of the case had become wide-spread, and the court-room was literally packed. It was a motley crowd that was gathered there, waiting in curious impatience to hear the evidence which

would either mar or make the future of the accused.

Mrs. Darling, the complainant, was first called to the witness box, and the lady took the oath amid the greatest silence. She gave her evidence in a clear, concise manner, stating that the necklace had been taken from her house some months ago, at a time when the prisoner was working in the vicinity and a frequent visitor at her home; that the article was of great value.

In answer to the court's interrogatories, she further stated that she identified it not alone from its peculiarity of manufacture, but also from the fact that on the clasp was engraved the initials of her maiden name—to wit: "D.S.," Deborah Shelbourne.

When this assertion was made the accused turned a shade paler, while a sickly feeling came over him, which circumstance did not escape the quick eye of the magistrate.

"Prisoner at the bar," that pompous individual began, when the evidence had all been taken, "you have heard the charge that has been brought against you. What have you to say in its defence—are you guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty!" came the clear, ringing retort, carrying conviction to many lenient minds as it vibrated through the specious though closely thronged auditorium, and young Alden stood boldly erect ready for the pending ordeal.

"Then, sir, explain yourself, and how you came in possession of the necklace, which is, beyond doubt, the property of Mrs. Darling."

It was evident from the manner and tone of the magistrate that he believed the prisoner guilty; in fact, circumstantial evidence was strong against him.

There he stood, a young man with little else in the world save his frank and honest face and strong right arm upon which to depend for a livelihood, and to such the mere possession of so valuable a piece of jewellery was a suspicious circumstance in itself.

Then, again, it had been pretty clearly proven that the article in question was the one stolen from the accuser, a resident of an obscure country village, and at a time when the accused had been at work in that out-of-the-way place.

Such was the evidence "piled up" against him, which seemed almost an invincible barrier between him and the acknowledgment of his innocence by the world.

True, Fred Alden had hitherto borne a good name and stainless character. But what of that? It would have little weight in this case.

The outlook was indeed dark, and would have caused many a stronger man than he to turn pale. Yet he was not from the mould by which cowards are made. His pallor was but momentary.

"Explain myself?" he repeated. "Thanks for the privilege. In the first place, your honour, the necklace does not, nor did it ever, belong to the lady; not that I doubt her sincerity when she states that it is the one stolen from her. She is labouring under a delusion, and with your permission I will relate a short story, which will, no doubt, satisfactorily explain matters."

"Proceed."

"Many years ago there resided in a city not far distant one Robert Shelbourne, a gentleman in comfortable circumstances. He was an eccentric fellow, with many strange peculiarities and original characteristics. His family consisted of two daughters—twins—named Delia and Deborah. These children were the light of his life, the stay of his declining years, and his love for them was little short of idolatry. Neither was the favourite, but each held an equal place in the old man's heart. Still, he was a man of iron will and stern determination, and to thwart his plans or rebel against his wish in the slightest particular was to incur his everlasting displeasure. This the sisters knew. Aa birthday gift to these young ladies, their father presented them each with a beautiful and very costly necklace, similar in construction and design to the one which I stand accused of steal-

ing. On the clasps he caused to be engraved their initials, which, you observe, would necessarily be alike—D. S. Years rolled by, and the two girls grew to womanhood. Suitors sought them in marriage, but Mr. Shelbourne would not consent to part with his children. In course of time, however, when all hope of gaining her father's acquiescence had been relinquished, Delia married in opposition to him. This enraged the old gentleman so much that he forbade his disobedient one ever to darken his door, and immediately executed a will bequeathing his entire property to the obedient Deborah. Still, the ejected one was happy in the love of her husband, a good and noble man, with but one fault—poverty. This union, however, was doomed to be short-lived, for the husband died soon after the marriage, leaving nothing save an infant son to be remembered by. Then came the bitter struggle of life. It was a hard task for the young mother, unaccustomed as she had been to daily toil, to go out into the hard, parsimonious world and seek a livelihood for herself and child. Yet she entered the struggle bravely, succeeding not only in procuring the necessities of existence but by dint of constant industry and self-sacrificing economy managed to give the little one whom God had entrusted to her care a first-class education. But the task eventually proved too much for her delicate constitution, and ere the work of self-abnegation was fully complete she was called home to that Father from whom there is no separation. Sir, that lady was my mother, and on her death-bed she handed me the necklace, with the words, 'Take it, my son; it is the only tie that binds me to the old life. Keep it, and when in after life you find one worthy to fill the relation nearer than that of mother let her wear in it token of my remembrance.'"

Here the narrator's voice became choked with emotion, and for some moments he was unable to proceed.

"Little more remains to be told," he continued, at length. "I have borne her words in mind to the letter, and in presenting the necklace did it in fulfilment of the wish."

The statement proved to be correct, and the injured youth was immediately released from custody.

Whoever had stolen the trinket which had belonged to Mrs. Darling it was abundantly clear that Fred Alden was not the culprit.

In due time the necklace was returned to Miss Leslie, from whom it had been so unceremoniously taken. Mabel was overjoyed, not simply on account of its restoration, for although her faith in her lover's honesty and integrity had been unchanged throughout, it was a great relief to see him cleared in the eyes of the world.

Mrs. Darling, too, was not backward in her endeavours to undo the great mischief she had unintentionally caused, but did everything in her power to atone for the error. And this was not a little, as Fred learned to his joy. Mr. Shelbourne on his death-bed had repented of his harsh treatment toward his disobedient daughter, expressing a desire to make some reparation.

But, alas! it was too late. He died before another will could be executed. His last words, however, had been:

"Divide the money equally." And thus the property had fallen by law to Mrs. Darling.

All this was made known to the young mechanic, and Mrs. Darling added that it had been her intention, in case she should ever find her sister, to carry out the wishes of their father by making an equal division of the estate. So, as Fred Alden was the rightful heir to his mother's share, it would be paid over to him as soon as the necessary legal arrangements had been made.

Thus, dear reader, our hero not only proved himself honest, upright and truthful, but by the same means found himself to be the happy possessor of a competency which enabled him, in the following spring, to marry the girl of his choice, and all, as the villagers expressed it, through Mabel Leslie's Birthday Present.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

It is said that express fares will be abolished by the 1st of May on the Great Western Railway.

It is proposed to pull down Hammermith Bridge. There have long been fears as to its stability when submitted to the rough test of thousands swarming like bees on every part of it at the boat races, and even when the traffic is great on the Derby Day.

MISS CHERRIE, the American actress, has come in for a plum, a relation having died and left her £100,000. She will doubtless shortly play in "Engaged."

THERE is a good story just now current of Mr. Childers's activity in economising Government labour. Quitting his office some time ago, he got down somewhere on the ground floor, when, suddenly recollecting he had a note to write, he turned into the first room he saw open. A young fellow stood there in front of the fire warming his back, evidently enjoying immunity for the present from anything like labour. Mr. Childers, upon whom anything in the shape of idleness acts like a red rag on a bull, inquired how the young fellow employed his time, and how much of it was occupied with work in his department. The reply was, "Not very fully, and that perhaps four days a week would be quite enough to do all I have to do." Mr. Childers then communicated his identity to the young man, and told the latter to expect to hear of some more work being found for him to do, so as to fill up his time. The War Secretary was then leaving the office, when the young fellow, who had taken in all this lecture with the most complete sang froid, said, "As you have kindly given me your name, I should like in return to give you mine. I am Mr. Dent's, the clockmaker's, young man, who comes here once a week to wind up the clocks, and am just resting myself for a bit." Mr. Childers felt that his vocation did not extend to clockmakers, out of doors, and was obliged to be content to take the will for the deed, and to postpone the meditated reform of this particular delinquent.

A SOCIETY has been formed for the purpose of building a new theatre, selecting the Strand district for a suitable site, to be exclusively devoted to the amateur, musical, dramatic, and high-art world, and to be called "The Amateur Theatre."

THE Buchanan Society of Glasgow have resolved to spend £500 on the renovation of the monument of George Buchanan, the historian of Scotland. The monument is situated within the manse grounds at Killurn, and at present a number of men are busily engaged in the work referred to.

LONDON omnibus proprietors announce that at last they have found what they have long been seeking after. It is known that they are largely defrauded. All sorts of contrivances have been adopted to check the conductor, or at least to check his speculations. But they seem, somehow, all to have failed. The British public would not co-operate. No doubt the simplest plan would be that adopted in Paris, where there is a uniformity of fare and a prompt demand for it when a customer enters the vehicle. But the Londoner is accustomed to pay when he likes, and resents being asked to pay before it suits his convenience. The company advertised, some time ago, that a large prize would be given for any effectual scheme that would register passengers. Now it is announced they have found what they want. Their vehicles will be fitted with it in a few days, and it will be visible in its operation and audible in its action. As yet nothing more is known definitely, but it is understood that the passenger, on getting in, will touch of necessity a spring that will ring a bell and record a number.

A MEMORIAL is in course of signature, for presentation to the Prime Minister, urging the Government to oppose the Channel Tunnel scheme. This memorial, which has been signed already by a large number of influential gentle-



men—among whom are personages of so diverse sympathies as the Duke of Cambridge, Mr. Alfred Tennyson, and Sir John Lubbock—urges opposition to the scheme, on the ground that should the tunnel be constructed it will take away from England that immunity from military scares which she has hitherto enjoyed.

A RATHER amusing incident occurred in an action arising out of a sporting dispute, which came before Mr. Justice Chitty at Liverpool recently. In the course of his opening speech Mr. Russell, Q.C., made a reference to Mr. Justice Chitty as "having sympathies for sport, if public information was to be credited." The Judge: "Having had, Mr. Russell?" (laughter). Mr. Russell: "I hope there is nothing incompatible with judicial dignity in the enjoyment of English sport." The Judge: "Not at all" (renewed laughter). Mr. Justice Chitty, it will be remembered, was a great rowing man; he rowed in the Oxford eight, and acted as umpire of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race for many years. He was, and is, a great tennis player. But he seems to have grown rather ashamed of his sporting tastes. He thinks them somewhat beneath the dignity of the Bench. He was very much chaffed soon after he was made a judge, because he announced when he gave away the prizes at a tennis tournament that his tennis days were over now. Why should he consider sport undignified? There are high precedents for the other view. The late Baron Martin was a great racing man, an honorary member of the Jockey Club; so was the late Lord Chief Justice of England; and so is at least one present member of the Bench, Mr. Justice Hawkins.

It is worthy of remark that during a period of less than twelve years no fewer than four successive Earls of Lonsdale will have reigned in Lowther Castle (the nobleman who now succeeds making the fourth), inclusive of the distinguished head of the family who died about twelve years since. Probably this is without parallel in the history of any English noble family in recent years. Since the title of Lonsdale was created in 1807 there have been six earls.

A TRAVELLER who has lately revisited the village of Ober-Ammergau, where he had seen the last performance of the Passion Play, writes to say that he is very sorry he went back, as the disillusioning process was extremely trying. The woman who had acted the Virgin Mary he found barefooted, dishevelled, and filthy, digging potatoes in a field. Mary Magdalene, presenting a most unsightly appearance, was on her hands and knees scrubbing a floor. The personator of Christ, with a mug of beer on his bench and puffing a huge German pipe, was carving ornaments in wood which had been ordered by tourists who had seen and admired him in the play. In the village inn, kept by Herod, Nicodemus, Pontius Pilate, Judas Iscariot, St. John, St. Peter, St. Matthew, Barabbas, and two or three of the centurions were making merry over their beer. A discussion arose among them about the Passion Play, there being a division of opinion as to how certain parts could be acted with the greatest effect. John and Judas were in a half-maudlin condition, and were singing snatches from some of the choruses in the play.

MR. HOWARD PAUL says "I heard this the other night at a club. Men like to see themselves in print. Men are modest. Women like to see themselves in silk or velvet."

THE Poet Laureate is said to be engaged on a poem to celebrate the approaching marriage of Prince Leopold with the Princess Helen.

CONCERNING the panic on the Paris Bourse it may not be uninteresting to inform our readers that even on that model of financial stability, the Bank of England, there have been several "runs." The earliest panic occurred on the invasion of the "Old Pretender" in the '15. The next was in '45, and was caused by the invasion of the "Young Pretender." In this last one the Bank was saved by the ingenious scheme of their agents demanding payment for their notes in sixpences, and who immediately paid in

the sixpences so received, thus preventing by engaging the time of the cashiers the bona-fide holders of notes from presenting theirs.

It is stated that a new form of obstruction will be commenced in the House of Commons after the new rules are passed, by raising a discussion on every railway, gas, water, or other private bill that comes before Parliament.

THE Queen will reside at Mr. Henfrey's villa at Mentone, known as the Châtelet des Rosiers, till the 15th of April.

THE wealthiest heiress of Russia, who was to have married the young ruler of Bulgaria, is engaged to Count Sumarokov, who is very wealthy himself. The princess-bride, Zeniade Yussupoff, brings her future husband a dowry of ten millions of roubles, with a couple of millions of family jewellery.

### IS IT LOVE?

WHAT makes thy beaming eye so bright?

Why glows it with that tender light?

When'er it looks on me?

Thy smile is sweeter, nor can I

Divine the veriest reason why

This change can ever be.

Yet still I know the change is there;

I mark thy burning cheek so fair,

And e'en would prove

The reason for those smiles so bright,

And wherefore fills thine eye with light?

Is this love?

You brought me once a garland bright,

Of fairest blossoms, pure and white,

And placed it o'er my brow.

I thought not, then, they e'er should prove

The offerings of thy tender love.

May I believe it now?

I know not, nor I ask not why

My heart throbs so when thou art by.

Oh, ne'er shall rove

My fancy from its idol; thou

Alone reign'st in this bosom now.

Is this love?

Art thou beside me?—how the blood

Leaps to my brow—a scarlet flood,

That fades when thou'rt away.

And kindled eye, and burning cheek,

Their tale of love will ever speak,

Plainer than words can say.

I tremble when thy glance I meet:

None other than thine accents sweet

My heart can move;

And, oh, 'tis happiness to me

To think of, live for, dream of thee

This is love!

### STATISTICS.

EMIGRATION.—The official returns made up to the close of 1881 show that 223,313 persons sailed from Liverpool for various parts of the world in the past year, being an increase of 45,274 as compared with the emigration of the previous year. From March last the monthly emigration from the Mersey was much more than in the corresponding months of 1880, the greatest number departing in May, when the figures were 38,263, or 8,971 in excess of May in the previous year. In December the number of passengers departing was 6,449, of whom 3,931 were English, 25 Scotch, 334 Irish, 1,826 foreign, and 233 of nationalities not ascertained. The figures showed a decrease of 6,803 on the emigration in November, and an increase of 1,206 on the returns of December 1880. The passengers for the United States numbered 5,853; British North America, 274; Australia, 14; South America, 97; East Indies, 127; West Indies, 15; China, 10; Cape of Good Hope, 5; and Africa, 49.

From a Post Office Savings Bank return it appears that the amount of deposits has in-

creased from £1,300,000 in 1880 to £1,600,000 last year, while the depositors themselves have increased in the same period from 400,000 to 700,000. The average amount of each deposit is much lower than before, having fallen from £3 5s. in the former year to £2 5s. last year.

AN official report upon the conscription in Russia for 1881 has been published. The number of those liable to military service was 779,000—about 15,000 less than the previous year. Originally the contingent was fixed at 235,000, but it was afterwards reduced by a decree of the Emperor to 212,000. The recruits taken numbered 210,106. It is calculated that the defaulters amounted to 31 per cent. of Jews and 3 per cent. of Christians.

### GEMS OF THOUGHT.

HE is wise who never acts without reason and never against it.

TRUTH can hardly be expected to adapt herself to the crooked policy and wily sinuosities of worldly affairs, for truth, like light, travels only in straight lines.

EVERYTHING without tells the individual that he is nothing; everything within persuades him that he is everything.

THE most miserable pettifoggery in the world is that of a man in the court of his own conscience.

HAPPINESS is perfume that one cannot shed over another without a few drops falling on one's self.

CUNNING is not the best nor the worst of other qualities. It floats between virtue and vice. There is scarce any exigency where its place may not, and perhaps ought not, to be supplied by prudence.

### HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BUBBLE AND SQUEAK.—Cut from a piece of boiled beef slices the thickness of a penny piece, trim and cut them into any shape, parts undone being the best; boil one large cabbage, one carrot, one onion, in salted water; when cooked drain and mince them together, very fine, removing any hard parts of the cabbage. Put into a saucepan a piece of butter the size of an egg, when melted put in the beef to warm, taking care it does not dry; this done, remove the meat and put in the vegetables; stir on the fire until they are very hot, moisten with a little good stock, add salt and pepper, and a little grated nutmeg; place them in the centre of the dish, put the slices of beef all around, pour over a little stock and serve.

BATTER AND APPLES.—Pare and core six apples, and stew them for a short time with a little sugar; make batter in the usual way, beat in the apples, and pour the pudding into a buttered pie-dish; the pudding, when properly done, should rise up quite light, with the apples on the top; to be eaten at table with butter and moist sugar.

PANCAKES.—Three eggs, one pint of milk, two tablespoonfuls of ale, two saltspoonfuls of salt, a little ginger, and a little grated lemon-peel, three-quarters of a pound of flour, half-pound of lard or dripping to fry in. Break the eggs and well beat them with the salt, ginger, and lemon-peel. Add the ale, and enough of milk to mix the flour (which should now be added) into a smooth paste; when this is beaten till quite free from lumps, add the remainder of the milk and well mix. The mixture will then be ready to fry. Have ready the pan, with lard or dripping boiling over a brisk fire; a small teaspoonful of batter is sufficient for a good-sized pancake. When fried, drain them on a strainer, or on letter paper pricked full of holes; serve them as quickly as possible, as they become heavy and indigestible if cold. Never pile them one on the other, as that at once makes them heavy. They may be served with jam, sugar and lemon-juice, or vinegar.

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## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**T. C.**—There is no such record, so far as we know. A malleable substance is one that can be hammered out thin, like lead, gold, or silver. One of the chief qualities of glass is its brittleness, which is the opposite of malleableness. In remote times the name of glass was given to any shining body, and thus malleable substances were sometimes spoken of as glass. This has occasioned some confusion, and in some instances has led to the belief that real glass was in former ages so made as to be malleable.

**KATE.**—A story is told—but, of course, not on good authority—that Mohammed attempted to show his power by commanding a mountain to come to him. The mountain did not move, whereupon Mohammed, not at all disconcerted, walked over to the mountain, making the remark you quote. It has passed into a proverb for one who, not being able to do what he wishes, does what he can.

**M. M.**—Nicotine is a colourless, transparent, oily liquid, obtained from tobacco leaves. It is a very powerful poison, one drop being sufficient to kill a dog in two or three minutes.

**M. W.**—To make queen cake, take one pound of flour, one pound of fine white sugar, three-quarters of a pound of butter, one teacupful of cream, and eight eggs. Beat the butter and sugar to a cream, and then beat the eggs separately. Add them to the butter and sugar, then the cream and flavouring, and then the flour. Beat well. Bake in small tin cups.

**GEORGE M.**—Phosphate of iron is a slate-coloured powder, insoluble in water. It is a valuable remedy in consumption, cancer, and various diseases, accompanied by a low state of the blood. Dose, two grains, three times a day.

**ALBERT.**—American copyrights are granted for twenty-eight years, with the privilege of renewal for fourteen years longer.

**E. S.**—Bunions are sometimes readily got rid of by painting them once or twice with iodine.

**C. H.**—Aromatic vinegar will remove warts.

**CLARA.**—Religion is a topic that should never be introduced into general society. Like politics, it is a subject dangerous to harmony. Persons are most likely to differ and least likely to preserve their temper on these topics.

**A. A.**—All slang is vulgar. It lowers the tone of society and the standard of thought. It is a great mistake to suppose that slang is witty or smart.

**DAN.**—Cribbing or crib-biting by a horse is said by some to be a diseased condition of the stomach rather than a bad habit, while others contend that it is the latter, as the companions of a crib-biter are likely to acquire by imitation the same habit. Several methods have been suggested to break up the habit, but it is generally conceded that the only remedy is restraint, and that the best preventive is the bar muzzle, consisting of an iron framework covering the lips and nose, and suspended from the head by a leather head collar, the bars far enough apart to allow the lips to reach the corn or hay, but not to permit the teeth to reach the manger.

**C. E. G.**—Carrier pigeons are noted for their love for home, and will find their way back to it when taken hundreds of miles away. They can be used to carry messages only to their homes, the birds being carried to the other end of the route. The training begins as soon as the birds are strong enough to fly, when they are taken in a covered basket to a place about half a mile from home and set free. The distance is increased each time, until it is found they will go back, no matter how far they are carried. They will fly at least thirty miles an hour, and even as high as ninety miles an hour is said to have been accomplished.

**CONSTANCE.**—The Guelphs were a line of princes originally Italian, and can be traced back to the ninth century. In the eleventh century they emigrated to Germany. The royal family of England and the dual line of Brunswick trace their descent to a Guelphic princess Kunigunde, who became the wife of Alberto Azzo II., Prince of Este, whose son was made Duke of Bavaria in 1071. One of the descendants of the latter, Otto I., in 1235, was made Duke of Brunswick. In the line of descent, Ernest Augustus, of the branch known

as the house of Brunswick-Luneberg, was created Elector of Hanover, in 1692. His wife, Sophia, daughter of the elector palatine, Frederick V., and of Elizabeth, daughter of James I. of England, was declared next heir to the British crown after Mary, William III., Anne, and their descendants. George Lewis, son of the preceding, succeeded as elector in 1693, and in 1714, on the death of Anne, became King of Great Britain. Thus the descent is traced through the house of Hanover to the house of Brunswick, and through the latter to the Guelphs. Our royal family has no surname, but is known as of the house of Hanover, etc., as stated above. The full name of the Queen is Victoria Alexandrina.

## TOO MUCH STYLE.

Love had its birth in a cottage,  
But soon began putting on airs,  
For he said the old house was homely,  
And needed too many repairs.  
The ceilings were low, and the parlours  
Unsuited to stylish display,  
So Love with his youthful partner  
Determined to move away.

Love purchased a modern dwelling,  
Where everything was en suite,  
A very palatial mansion  
In a very palatial street;  
And out of their rural cottage  
Did Love and his better half  
Depart, with no pang of sorrow,  
To worship the golden calf.

She went to wedding receptions,  
To parties, concerts and balls,  
And the rest of her time devoted  
To shopping and making calls;  
Was hand-and-glove with old Plutus,  
Who tried his best, I'll engage,  
To make this couple imagine  
They lived in the Golden Age.

He had his clubs and his dinners,  
Where ladies were not received,  
And among the breakers and brokers  
Was off of his cash relieved;  
And Love, that by many a token  
His tender regard displays,  
Was taught to be civil-spoken  
And free from old-fashioned ways.

Their children were watched by nurses,  
And kept in such regal pomp,  
There wasn't a chance for a frolic,  
No, never a chance for a romp;  
And the prattle of youthful voices,  
The clinging of baby arms,  
For these very stylish parents  
Had no very special charms.

And Love—who is never formal—  
On being left in the lurch,  
For a cheery and cosy corner  
One morning began a search;  
There were damask and satin curtains,  
Velvet and plush around,  
And over the stately mansion  
Elegant things were found.

Mirrors that came from Venice,  
Clear as Italian skies,  
Eugs in their depths concealing  
Turkish and Tyrian dyes;  
Treasures from loom and quarry,  
Glinting with many a spark,  
Like flashes of lightning playing  
Like elfin sprites in the dark.

But never a cosy corner  
Where Love could make sweet delay,  
Forgetting the losses and crosses  
And troublesome cares of the day;  
And back to his native dwelling  
Went Love—and he sighed the while,  
And said, "There isn't a place for me  
In a house where there's too much style."

## PUZZLES.

## LXVI.

## ENIGMA.

It's taken with us when we die;  
What some almost possess;  
What the miser gives away;  
He can do nothing less.

The prisoner says it in defence  
When placed before the bar;  
What some may be to others,  
Who perfect strangers are.

What no one cares to work for;  
What everyone should owe;  
What you may stand in need of;  
I trust it may be so.

It is of no importance  
If you should be in doubt;  
So should you fail to guess it,  
You will be nothing out.

## LXVII.

## SQUARE WORDS.

1. An entertainment. A place North of Europe. To worship. To obey. One of the productions of Nature.
2. A female name. Parts of time. Inhabitants of Denmark. A princess's name. Patient animals.
3. An upright position. More docile. To divert. Birds' dwellings. Garment.

## LXVIII.

## WORD PUZZLES.

1. A class of animals. 2. Space. 3. A light, quick blow. 4. An entrance. 5. A novelist. 6. A kind of igneous rock. 7. A colour. 8. To dwell. 9. A state in America.
- The above, read backwards, name: 1. A plant. 2. A marsh. 3. A short pipe. 4. A measure. 5. A town of Russia. 6. A portion. 7. A poet. 8. Mischief. 9. A great chain of mountains.

## LXIX.

## PUZZLE.

Now if you will but carefully fix  
What's always called the number six  
Right just in front to one who was wise,  
When both are joined aright, you'll see  
Something belonging to you and me—  
Cheeks, chin, forehead, and eyes.

## LXX.

## CHARADE.

An animal for first please find;  
A consonant next bring to mind;  
Part of the body in last is seen,  
A kind of flower is whole, I ween.

## ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLES.

## LVIII.

Consider (Con-side-r).

## LIX.

Sheridan.

## LX.

Horse, rose.

## LXI.

Unite, unit, tin.

## LXII.

Steel.

## LXIII.

Rape, ape.

## LXIV.

Moore.

## LXV.

Devil, lived, evil, vile.

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